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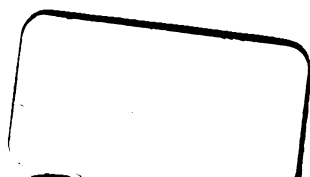
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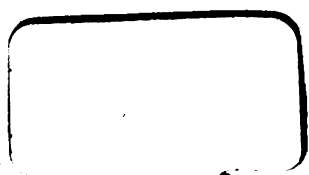
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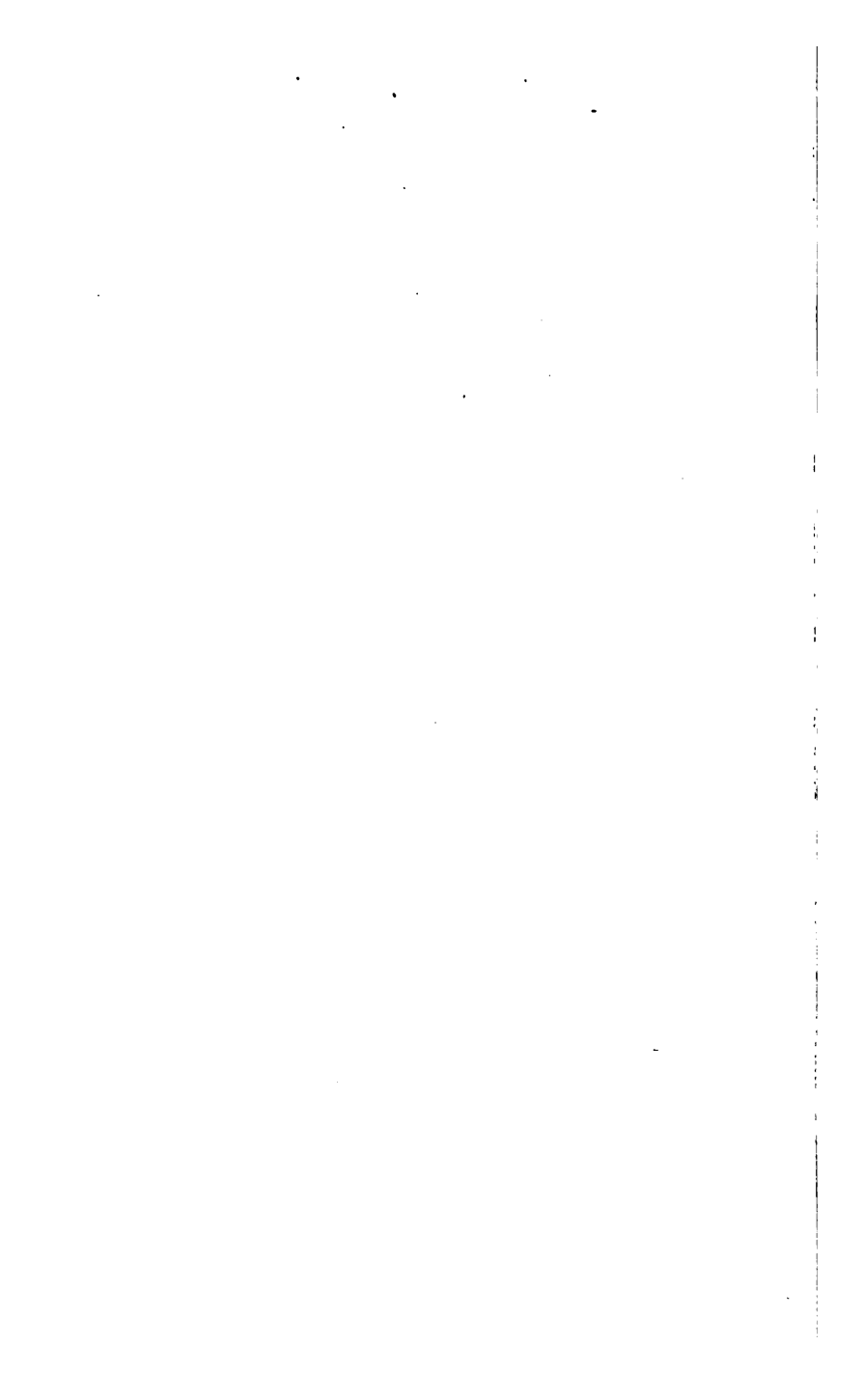
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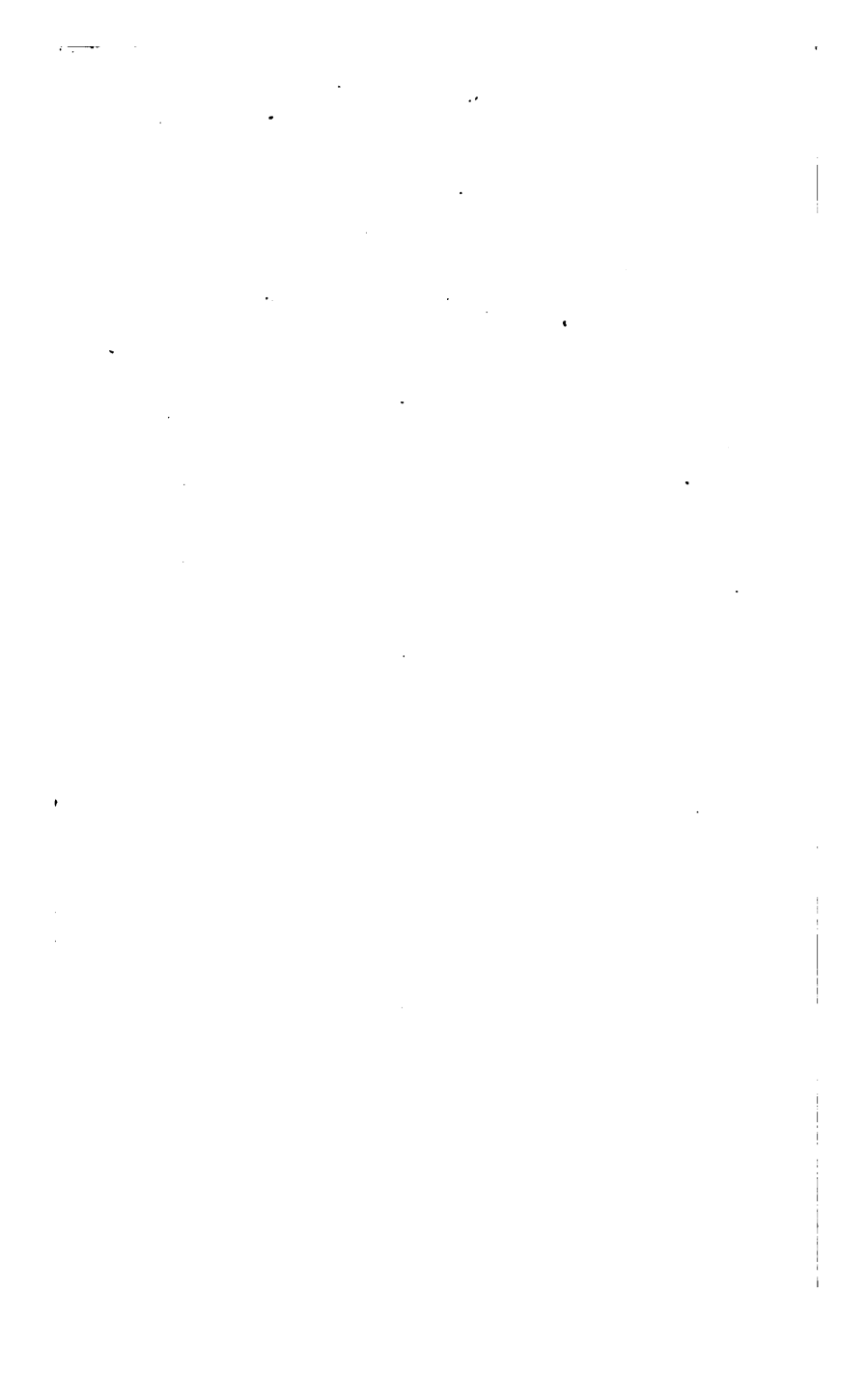
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CHATTERBOX





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THE
HEIRESS AND HER LOVERS.

A Nobel.

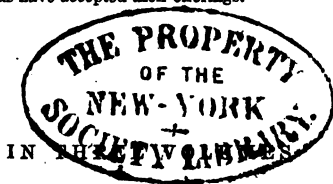
BY
GEORGIANA LADY CHATTERTON,

AUTHOR OF

"MEMORIALS OF LORD GAMBIER," "TRANSLATIONS FROM THE GERMAN OF
J. P. RICHTER," &c.

The black-winged Erinnyes
Will never enter those homes where the hands are lifted up in prayer,
And the gods have accepted their offerings.

ÆSCHYLUS.

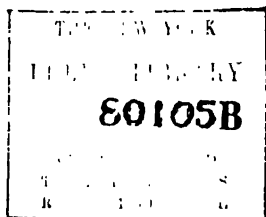


VOL. III.

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1863.

EMB



THE
HEIRESS AND HER LOVERS.



Being mortal, we should never be over-arrogant,
For insolent pride in blossoming engenders the seed
Of misfortune, from which we reap a whole harvest of tears.
ÆSCHYLUS.

THE two cousins travelled to Oxford by different trains, and did not meet again that day ; for Edwin thought it would be wiser to allow time for the anger he had seen depicted on Roland's countenance to evaporate before they met. He hoped it would ; for as yet he only knew the better parts of his cousin's character, and was not aware of a certain meanness in Roland's disposition, which occasionally disposed him to look on generosity and unselfishness with contempt.

Edwin resolved in his own mind not to

obtrude himself on Roland for a time—not to seek an interview, but whenever they should meet his course was plain. He made allowances for him, remembered the superior advantage he had himself enjoyed in his father's care, as well as in the absence of all the temptations which must have beset Roland's path from earliest childhood; and he schooled himself to bear whatever ill will his cousin might manifest.

But Roland evidently shunned him, and would not speak to him or notice him the next time they met.

Then Edwin remembered Nesta's letter, and the touching appeal she made to him to endeavour to influence his cousin for good, and he resolved to seek purposely for an interview. He had heard with great regret that Roland had given up study, and now lived among a notoriously idle, spend-thrift, and good-for-nothing set.

Therefore, the next time Edwin happened to meet his cousin alone, which was one evening in the street, he accosted him, and would not appear to see Roland's evident endeavours to shake him off.

"Well, old fellow," said Edwin, in a kindly tone, "how are you getting on with



your reading? I fear ill enough, if all tales are true. Now, do take care, for one is so sorry afterwards not to get through. And it will grieve those whose good opinion you value."

Roland retorted with angry violence, "I care for no one's good opinion. What can it signify to me? You, indeed, who are already celebrated," he added, bitterly, "who go in for poetry, and that sort of thing; you would have something to lose if you don't get through in a stunning manner; but I am nothing—no one except my mother will care. . . ."

"Yes, but think of her, just think of all the troubles she's had—years of anxiety—years of care and sorrow. Don't add to them now, for you're the person she cares most for in the world. Think of her anxious loving eyes, her careworn face. I am sure you'd rather cut off your right hand than force her to be disappointed in you. Come now—there's a good fellow. . . ."

"But I can't help it—I can't fix my mind. . . . It is quite impossible for me, now, to read."

"So one thinks till one tries, but——"

"Oh, I dare say, it's very jolly to be you; confound you, you write poems, and the greatest beauties of the day are ready to worship you. . . I saw the look on her face, when you came into the studio. . ."

"This is wrong," said Edwin, an ashy paleness overspreading his face at his cousin's mention of that look, which he remembered but too well. "You must not allow the fancied surmise of a single minute to interfere with the destiny of a life. . . She doesn't care a rap for me . . . how could she? I've only seen her once . . . and I'm nobody, and haven't a sixpence. Oh, Roland, good Heavens, if I had but happiness placed within my reach as you seem to have, only to work hard for it, and become a worthy fellow. . . Look here, I've got to work hard all my life, and without hope. . ." A choking in his throat prevented further utterance; he turned away. Roland caught him by the hand. He was touched.

"Edwin," he said, "you are a good fellow; I wish I was like you."

"Then come and read with me of a night for a couple of hours," replied Edwin, by a strong effort recovering his wonted calmness; "shake off those fellows; they are no

good; they are not worthy of you, upon my word they are not."

"Well, I'll see about it — to-morrow," said Roland, shaking hands with his cousin; and they parted better friends than they had ever been before.

To-morrow came. But Roland went on as usual. His purpose was too weak, his downward tendency too strong, and when the fatal day of the examinations came, he failed.

Edwin made one more effort for his cousin. He wrote to Nesta such a letter as he knew would be shown to Letitia, giving excuses for Roland's failure, describing how preoccupied his mind had been since his last return from London, and how impossible he had found it to fix his attention to anything.

"Edwin alludes to Roland's love for you," said Nesta, as she showed Letitia the letter.

"Yes," thought Letitia, "he is evidently anxious every one should think well of Roland. Then he cannot care for me . . . certainly not. . . . He cannot be thinking of me, or he would say that he is coming to London. Yet, perhaps—is it all gene-

rosity? He looked so glad that day when we met at Signor Collini's. . . ."

Letitia had very few opportunities of talking with Nesta, and even had it been otherwise, it would have been impossible for her to confide her thoughts about Edwin. She could not bear to wound that dear friend, knowing how much she would take to heart the disappointment of her son.

Still there was something in the bare thought of Edwin that made her feel so perfectly happy, that at some moments she felt she would be quite satisfied with any lot in life provided she might think of him. Her love was of that trustful character which is the highest type of affection—the same feeling which prompted Thecla to express that she was supremely happy in the sole conviction that she loved a worthy object.

Du Herr, gerufe dein Kind zurück
Ich habe genossen die irdische glück,
Ich habe gelebt und geliebet.

CHAPTER II.

Do not bear this exclusive custom in thy mind
 Of imagining that what thou sayest, and nothing else, is right.
 For whoever thinks that he alone has wisdom
 Or clever speech, or a soul that others have not,
 That man's mind, when unfolded, is seen to be empty.
 But for a man, even though he be a sage, to learn
 Many things, and not to strive too much against others, is no disgrace.

* * * *

For not indeed are they of to-day or yesterday, but ever at all times
 These laws of God shone forth; and no one knows since when they arose.

SOPHOCLES.

TOWARDS the end of May, Aunt Mary arrived at De Lacy House, and her presence was peculiarly advantageous to Nesta during this period of anxiety about her son's prospects both at college and in his after life. A few days after her arrival, she and Mr. Praid were discussing success in society and the qualities required to produce it.

“There are two kinds of that success,”

said Mr. Praid, "and two different kinds of talent required to attain them. The one is the talent to attain a high position among those who are uppermost in the land, and to hold influence among them ; the other is the talent to amalgamate your guests well, and extract from all the greatest amount of *pleasantness*. Ambition is a necessary ingredient in the first, amiability in the second——"

"As it is in all expression of good breeding," said Aunt Mary. "Yet there are many people, imbued with the true spirit of good breeding, who have not sufficient instinct of arrangement to enable them to make all their guests show themselves off to the best advantage. I have often thought of putting down in my diary some hints on the subject gathered from experience."

"I wish you would, and give me a copy of it. I will have it printed, and distribute copies of it."

"No ; my diary is only for my friends—those who will read with indulgence, and take it in the spirit which actuates me in writing it."

Here the conversation was broken off ; but the next morning Aunt Mary brought

out the large old diary, and began writing as follows :

AUNT MARY'S RECIPE FOR A PLEASANT PARTY.

There are few things more conducive to the success of parties than the judicious management of chairs.

At old Lady C——k's parties a certain number of chairs in her drawing-room used to be fastened to the floor, having been previously placed in positions best calculated to render formal circles impossible, to protect flirtations (as she said), and to prevent shy people from feeling isolated by too much space intervening between themselves and others.

Many of her guests, indeed, rebelled stoutly against what they considered an arbitrary measure. I have seen them tugging lustily at these nailed chairs. They rebelled, perhaps unconsciously, at the idea that the plan had been devised as a check upon their awkwardness, and this tended to mar its effect. For it hurts our pride to be reminded that we English are a shy race—not collectively ~~gifted~~ with the talent for what is commonly called “society,” and, like perverse children, we rebel at anything

in the shape of leading-strings, or forced sociability. Therefore, I do not advise Lady C——k's plan, although her parties were often particularly pleasant.

But, with a little care and forethought, the result may be attained without nailing chairs to the floor. In the first place, there should be plenty of chairs, of various shapes, sizes, and height. But, if many guests are expected, the greater number of the chairs should be small and light; and a considerable number of these should be pushed close under the tables, or, at any rate, in places where they will neither obtrude themselves on the observation, nor occupy any required space until they are wanted. Then some large, heavy, comfortable chairs should be placed with their faces to the sofas and their backs to the centre of the rooms, at different and unequal distances. These are of the kind Lady C——k used to nail to the floor, and were in the positions I have just described.

We often observe that people enjoy themselves in very unequal degrees at different houses. I mean, when they meet the very same society, and almost the same people. This is because at some houses they are

allowed to crowd densely into some parts of the house, or room, and to block up doorways, while other portions remain quite empty. When this unpleasant result occurs, it indicates that the mistress has no superintending influence—no talent for society.

But this talent may be, to a certain extent, acquired, and principally so, by attending to a few maxims which I have gathered from long experience. I had an aunt and a great-aunt, whose houses were, of their day, the pleasantest in London, and my mother has often told me of the means they employed to ensure the social enjoyment of their guests.

Those two ladies were eminently agreeable, yet it was not their own conversational talents which made their houses so pleasant; it was chiefly that they endeavoured to draw out the talents of their guests, and to facilitate the enjoyment of all, by contriving that none should be disagreeably placed—have no one to talk to or be amused by.

A few high vases of flowers on centre tables, and some good drawings raised on high desks, are very conducive to the com-

fort of shy people—for they form a shelter from observation, and also an excuse for standing near, and for appearing occupied in admiring them. Unless a very great crowd is expected, the centre tables should never be cleared away; but if extra standing or sitting room is required, endeavour to make it by clearing away cabinets, or other furniture from the walls, and put chairs and sofas against them. This economises space for sitting; and, if possible, you should *enable* all your guests to sit down. If centre tables are cleared away, there is sure to be alternately a dense crowd, or a large clear space of unbroken carpet in the middle of the room, and either of these misfortunes is disagreeable; for shy people do not like to traverse an open space, and thus their shyness produces the crowd at which they grumble.

Some persons imagine that ottomans are advantageous; but I say, beware of them, for I have never seen them answer the purpose for which they were designed—*i.e.* the prevention of formality. They are generally very much in the way, and helplessly unmanageable.

However, chairs and tables, and all such

things, although important, are only accessories. The principal desideratum is that the hostess should really try—that her chief aim should be to give her guests *pleasure*. Her own peculiar talents, whether musical, conversational, or artistic, should be used only as a means to attain this end, and not for the sake of being admired for them herself.

If a hostess is much occupied with her own talents, or looks, or dress, she cannot bestow that kind of attention upon her guests which will ensure their enjoyment. If she indulges in any feeling of superiority—if she allows the thought to occur to her, “I look, or dress, or sing better than so-and-so” —that thought will unconsciously communicate to her face and manner an expression which will impress those present with a sense of their inferiority, and thus tend to mar their enjoyment. In fact, humility, and truthful love to our neighbours, are the great principles necessary to ensure a pleasant party, or any social reunion—in fact, they are as much necessary on these minor occasions as in the more important avocations of life.

* * * * *

Tuesday.—I have just returned very tired and hot from a fête at those beautiful new gardens. The mass of flowers, and the tasteful arrangement of their colours, surpassed anything of the kind I have before seen. Perhaps I was able to enjoy them more than usual.

Letitia was there, walking with little Lady Di and her mother; but the moment she caught sight of Nesta, she came up to her and remained with her all the rest of the time. Yet I do not think this empressment was caused by any interest in Roland; for I purposely mentioned his name, and it seemed suddenly to damp her pleasure.

Honorina of course was not there; she does not care for flowers, nor, indeed, for anything now, it strikes me, but herself. Not even for her very beautiful daughter! The kind of blazéd indifference which she evinces is a bad symptom in the human soul. It is one of the surest evidences of deterioration. We ought to become happier as we grow old. I mean, we ought to have learnt to derive more and more pleasure from everything; for appreciation of what is good and beautiful must year after year become more fully developed if we

have lived to any purpose ; and though the peculiar enjoyment which physical vigour communicates to all sensation may, perhaps must be diminished, yet the training and cultivation which the bodily senses have received increase their appreciative capacity, and we consequently derive more pleasure from all we see, feel, think of, or imagine. In fact, to be really fitted for Heaven, we should (I think) become happier even in this world as we grow old.

Our natural instinct, too, induces us to improve. Most people hope and long to improve. We all look forward to something more, though perhaps few are conscious of wishing to become better. But, at any rate, we all expect or hope to become happier, and I verily believe that, the older we grow, this expectation or hope is ever strengthening instead of diminishing, in spite of endless disappointments and bitter sufferings. I have the strongest faith in the capacity we all possess to improve. I believe most firmly in our powers of individual development, while I as firmly disbelieve in the modern theory, which is now becoming so fatally common—the progressive development of the human race in this world.

I have read most of the books which have been published on this subject—the positive and progressive theories of the melancholy and depressing writers of the present day—in most modern languages, and I see that the tendency of these theories of progression and development is to increase the mystery which involves the objects of our creation and entrance into this world, where, if we are deprived of hope, suffering evidently preponderates over happiness.

These writings, and their success, show that there are very few *philosophers* in the ancient meaning of the word now existing. For certainly these moderns of whom I speak are not lovers of wisdom, although I suppose their object is the same as that which instigated the ancient philosophers—namely, the instruction of mankind. Ought they not rather to be called *φιλόμαχοι*—lovers of dissension?

By this question and these remarks I am earning for myself a large portion of extra abuse from whoever reads this diary. For I observe that the theory of progressive development, and its natural, nay, necessary consequence—a spirit of disbelief in the Christian Revelation, nay, even in the mere

Pagan hope, immortality—is spreading widely among all ranks. It is rapidly invading the high and the low, and has even seized hold on many of those who belong to a profession which is especially devoted to the care of souls, and who receive emolument for doing so. Is this honest? How can we expect that the common people—or any people, high or low—will abstain from the gratification of their passions and desires—for instance, from thefts or murder—if these proud gardeners of souls succeed in their endeavours to eradicate all faith in the Divine commands which prohibit such acts? When clergymen write books for the sole purpose of making “infidelity easy for the million,”* they lead the minds of the multitude to the conclusion that they may give the reins to their unbridled passions. Why should murder or theft be even considered criminal, if we disbelieve in Revelation—now especially, in these days, that we have no longer any guide towards the principles of goodness which the ancients possessed in their cultivation of, and veneration for, Beauty?

* See a very excellent pamphlet on “The Colenso Controversy considered from the Catholic Standpoint,” published by Dolman.

CHAPTER III.

Oh Love, invincible in battle;
Love, who smitest the rich;
Who on the fair cheeks
Of young damsels reposest at night,
And who roamest to and fro on the seas and amid rustic abodes,
Not any of the immortals is able to fly from thee,
Neither any ephemeral mortals escape.

SOPHOCLES.

“Do not be over-anxious for this marriage,” said Aunt Mary one day to Nesta, when they had both been perplexed about Letitia’s feelings on the subject, on meeting her that morning at a breakfast. “In your wish to secure such a girl as Letitia, I am afraid you allow yourself to forget her belongings—her mother, and those wild, spendthrift brothers.”

“Ah, I do not forget them, indeed; but she seems so totally unconnected with them—so completely separated from anything that is bad. The only one of her relations who seems to harmonise with her at all, is her poor old father. They say he has entirely

lost his senses, but I am certain he knows her. She took me into his room one lucky day when I found her at home, in her mother's absence, and I wish you could have seen the touching manner in which he tried to raise his poor hands to her head; and when she knelt down before him, he laid them on her beautiful forehead, and seemed to bless her."

"It is very unfortunate that Lord Ardfinnan has taken such a dislike to Ireland. It is more—it is wrong, and he deserves to experience great loss of income, which he will, and must do, as years go on. Will he not be persuaded to have the fêtes for Roland's coming of age kept there?"

"I hope so; for although I have more reason than he has to dread returning to either Dermot Castle or Carrigroghan, yet I would most gladly go; because it is right, and the poor people must suffer so fearfully from having no resident family. I have often told him this."

"There must be something more than we know that has prevented his going."

"Perhaps it may be in some way connected with that mysterious affair of the loss of old Mr. O'Neil's Will. I sometimes think

and hope, and yet dread, that it may come to light, and poor Henry be reinstated in his rights. With their large family, such poverty is very trying. I have an idea that my maid Florentine has some strange suspicion about the cause of Morgan's dislike to Ireland. She will not tell what it is. At one time she was anxious to see you, and tell you something; and yet, now, nothing will induce her to tell it to you, whatever it is, or speak of that subject at all."

"I will endeavour to discover, though, if possible," said Aunt Mary, after a pause.

"And you are going there this year, too?" said Nesta.

"Yes; for I love that beautiful Dingleford Bay, and all the dear wild witty people; besides, I am of some use to the Verdons."

"And to the Dromores, and Father Murphy, and numbers of others; and I know you have been the greatest comfort to poor Lord Mowbray."

"I hope so, for Lord Mowbray felt the failure of your happiness more than any of us were aware of, for many years."

"Yes. After having gone through so much, and made up his mind to such a sacrifice for my sake, it was a great aggrava-

tion of the trial to find that—that I have had some few troubles since. Every one has them; but, to a mind of his noble and peculiar cast, the knowledge that I was perfectly happy would have gone far to reward him for the very great suffering which he voluntarily endured. But I ought not to speak on this subject at all.”

“My poor Nesta! There is no danger for you. To many women such a subject would be fraught with insidious perils; few could venture on such a retrospection with impunity; but I have no fear of your ever forgetting your duty to your husband. I have known you too long, and have studied you too intently, to be mistaken in that.”

“Yet I deceived him when I went to Kiloran about Roland O’Neil’s Will. I have never got over that, although I felt so strongly at the time that it would be wicked to do otherwise, knowing what I did—an unpardonable wrong towards poor Henry, who was then struggling to get on, with a young family, and an income much smaller than it is now; and I feel so still. I could not act otherwise without bitter remorse. But I ought to have told Morgan of it—at any rate, after Mr. O’Neil’s death. I ought

to tell him now. I am deceiving him every day that passes without my doing so—culpably deceiving him, because I shrink from the consequences of an act which I still feel to have been right, or at least necessary.”

Aunt Mary shook her head decisively. “My poor Nesta,” she said, “I have known him from a boy. You *must not* tell him. It grieves me bitterly to be forced to give such counsel to a wife—more especially when that wife is yourself; but I repeat—you know I said so from the first—you *must not* tell him. It would be quite useless to do so; and that instinct to brood mischievously over wrongs given or received, which is the worst point in the Irish character, and often mars the action of a thousand noble ones, is terribly strong in him; you know not *what* evil you might provoke, or against *whom*, by telling him this.”

“I have often thought,” said Nesta, “that he would have turned out very differently if he had married Honoria—that his finer qualities would have been developed by (what shall I call it?) communion with a more kindred spirit—by a better assorted marriage—a marriage with one who would have attracted his sympathies, which

I have never succeeded in doing, though I have tried to do so—oh! how anxiously!”

“They might, they could have acted on each other for good—they have done it for evil to each. I told them so years ago. I never thought you were suited to him; but you have done, and will continue to do, your duty to him thoroughly.”

“I have very much to be thankful for; and I still hope to gain Morgan’s love at last. But tell me—for I think you were at Stapleton Park last winter—is Lord Mowbray tolerably happy now? I sometimes grow morbid, and feel that I am destined to fail in every way with all those whom I ought to influence for good. It is very wrong of me to feel so, and I check myself always; but it is very difficult to keep one’s mind in a right direction. Is he tolerably happy?”

“It very nearly killed him, his having crushed down his love for you; and yet I cannot help thinking that his life has been preserved by his affections, for his existence is wrapped up in those whom he loves, and his fine nature finds so much to love in many—or rather, he has the rare faculty of drawing forth people’s good qualities, their

better nature, and then viewing them in the bright light which he has been the means of casting upon them."

"That is quite true : but oh ! how much more plainly I see all this now, than I did when I was a stupid, wilful girl of eighteen."

"Well, perhaps you were what we often call stupid ; your faculties had not been sharpened and awakened by any great emotion of either joy or sorrow. I believe that some people's constitutions require a dangerous illness to develop them fully, and in like manner our minds are sometimes not thoroughly awakened until we have nearly died of grief. But if we have proudly rebelled against it, or allowed ourselves to be thoroughly crushed—if we succumb to either of the two extremes—our minds are maimed for life, and the grief had much better have killed us."

"It is owing to you, dear Aunt Mary, that I bore my grief in what you convinced me was the right way. But how difficult it was, and is ! And I had the additional suffering of knowing that Lord Mowbray was unhappy too—and through me !"

"He is certainly not happy in the

common acceptation of the term ; but I don't think it possible to be owner of his conscience and be actually unhappy. The only defect I have ever remarked in his character, is a certain tendency to follow out principles beyond the spirit of them, and hence to fancy causes that do not exist."

"Yes, I remember once hearing him express his conviction that all the aggravated distress—all the irreligious ignorance of the lower orders—all the spirit of disbelief in the higher ranks, have been caused by the Reformation. Now that can't be."

"Perhaps not. But did you ever read Cobbett's History of the Reformation?"

"No. Was it written by *the* Cobbett? I thought he was a Protestant dissenter."

"An Unitarian, I believe ; but I am not sure. Allowing for controvertible statements (and they are to be found, by-the-by, in every history I ever read), you will find there reminders of some facts which show that Lord Mowbray is not quite without grounds for his views—as regards the comparative pauperism of now and then. And, with regard to disbelief, even granting that the Reformers collectively were right

as to their work of destruction, and that the articles of faith settled by some of them in particular represented the Church founded by our blessed Lord, still, what is commonly called the Reformed faith stands at the disadvantage of being based on denial, not on assertion—on what is not, rather than on what is. When several different builders have demolished different parts of an edifice, the idle and mischievous will gradually do the rest, till at length the edifice will be re-examined, and people may, perhaps, begin to doubt whether its foundations were really so unsound as to justify demolition, instead of repair. *A propos de rien*, I was thinking last night at the Opera that Letitia seemed now to have fully made up her mind not to accept your son. Some decided change has come over her since last week."

"Yet she seemed more fond of me than ever; even the tears started to her eyes when we met; and with what difficulty she restrained herself from keeping my hand in hers."

"Yes, I perceived this too, and I think there is some mystery we cannot fathom. Can it be some artful plan of Honoria's?

for I see she wants her to marry that dreadful Lord Blandon. That woman is always unfathomable."

"Lord Blandon admires her, I know; but I don't think he will ever be induced to marry any one; at least, so Mr. Praid says."

"Poor Honoria!" said Aunt Mary. "I have watched her slowly deteriorating for two-and-twenty years. She was capable of better things—but she is an awful woman now!"

CHAPTER IV.

One thing only it behoves me to have on my side—those gods
Who revere justice; for these things joined together
Give victory, but bravery brings no advantage
To mortals, unless they possess the favour of the gods.

EURIPIDES.

AUNT MARY'S JOURNAL, JULY 3RD, 18—.

"I AM come to talk to you about the Devil," said old Lady E——, one day in Paris; and I only wish I could remember all the wise things she said upon a subject we are all much too prone to forget. I believe that many people do not think they are surrounded by evil spirits as well as good: in fact, they disbelieve in Satan and holy angels, although they are so often mentioned in the very Scriptures in which they put implicit faith! The sight of Morgan (and, if ever a man was possessed of a devil, he certainly is) and his lovely and loving wife, this morning, put me in mind of Lady

E——'s conversation. Here is a man who has attained everything he wished for—everything that the wildest dreams that ever entered into a young head of twenty-one, just entering into a badly-situated, badly-tenanted Irish property of eight hundred a year, in wild Tipperary, could ever form. There he is, a peer, with eighty thousand a year, and talents sufficient to make him a minister any day—there he is now, oppressed and depressed by some strange temper, or remorse, or fear, or something that mars all his enjoyment, and almost paralyses his powers of mind. He sometimes treats his wife like a dog, and gives vent to his ill humour by saying all manner of bitter and cutting things to her. Yet the dear angel never loses her patience and temper for a moment. And sometimes her forbearance is rewarded by his evincing a sudden fit of kindness. For a rare interval he seems to have a heart, and to care for her, and venerate her too. And that keeps alive her strong affection, and enables her to pray without ceasing for him, and to bear all the severe trials his dark days and months entail; for his lucid intervals are very short and rare.

I am very glad that he has resolved to go to Ireland, and to have the chief rejoicings for his son's coming of age in his beautifully restored castle. And that son! What can I say—what can I think of him? His mind is an unwritten page; but his habits, his temper, already preponderate towards evil. Poor Nesta! God grant that she may be spared the misery of seeing her son follow in his father's steps. But——

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The great difficulty there is in doing right, in forming those habits of thought and feeling which alone can enable us to enjoy a better world hereafter—this great difficulty it is which makes me dread, and turn with a feeling of horror from all indication of the beginnings of sin. Long experience convinces me that it is only in the beginning that we have any power over ourselves. We can only “prepare our hearts.” That is why I can never laugh at the sight or even mention of drunkenness, or any kind of excess that tends to diminish, even were it but for a moment, our powers of self-control.

Education—for the upper classes as well as the lower—becomes more and more diffi-

cult. Modern discoveries, or rather imaginary discoveries (for every succeeding year shows how little is really known!), have tended to unsettle all belief, more than fathers of families, and those persons who wish to educate their children properly, have any idea of. There are so few settled opinions afloat, that there seems to be no resting-place whereon to fix the lever which is to draw up the young mind. When young ladies and gentlemen are taken to church with one hand, and such books as Buckle's, the "Vestiges," the Essays and Reviews, and other works of this class, are placed before them with the other, which are they to imagine that their parents wish them to believe? Truly, it was much more easy for our grandmothers to be religious and good than it is for the present generation; therefore, when we find fault with the fast young ladies, whose eyes, noses, and shoulders seem to bid defiance, by their self-conceited expression, to all beholders, we must remember what their minds have been nourished upon. But you will perhaps say, half the young ladies have neither capacity nor taste to read such kind of books. Perhaps not; but they

hear the flippant opinions expressed by others upon these books. They see a father who has, perhaps, built a church, reading with avidity, and sometimes, as I have seen, even pronouncing praise upon a book which they are told by others is to prove there is no truth in the very Scriptures which have induced that father to build that church. And he goes to it, and they are taken there every Sunday. Truly, these anomalies are enough to puzzle wiser brains than those of young ladies and gentlemen.

Some ten or fifteen years ago, when the contradictory jumble was not quite so great, young ladies ventured to have some opinions, and show some faith in *some* religion. But now it seems to be getting so entirely beyond their comprehension, or possibility of reconciliation, that they give it all up, and take refuge in increased concern about their dress, riding, and matters of the present moment.

It seems to me that one of the strongest proofs that the world is going into its dotage, is its assumption of strength. It is natural that persons should pique themselves chiefly on those qualities in which they are con-

scious of being deficient.* To appear full of life—to live fully, vigorously, and fast—is the great object and aim. Yet the weakness of the present race is betrayed by nothing more plainly than in its want of repose. I have always observed that there is no real strength of thought or mind without an appearance of repose. This also is the case with regard to the body; and I have been struck by the difference in the walk and movements of people both in high and low life as years have passed on.

This difference is more perceptible in women, because their petticoats show more the jerky movements given to the whole figure by want of repose! The whole fabric of crinoline and mantle flutters and wabbles about, yet they do not get over the ground quickly. I can remember, years ago, the swift pace and gracefully-buoyant tread of a *then* young aunt of mine, although she was encumbered by the court dress and wide hoop worn in old Queen Charlotte's time. And I can well remember that the walk of most persons in former days was more akin to the fleet pace of a well-bred

* See an excellent article in the *Saturday Review* on "The Softening of the Brain."

horse, or the soaring of a bird. Now it is like the stagger of a tired hack, or the tremulous flutter of a bird that has lost its strength and is falling to the ground.

And again, because this age is slow, it likes to be called fast. It is essentially slow in its perception of beauty—slow in its capacity for real enjoyment—slow from its deficiency in the power to seize quickly on whatever is really enjoyable, beautiful, and good.

Yes, *good*—for nothing that is not really good of its kind produces happiness, or enjoyment either; although there is a strong prejudice afloat against what are called good people. Yet we profess to like good dinners, good painters, or musicians; but we think it indicates the bugbear *slowness* if we like good people. And even those persons who are really good are often reckoned dull.

One reason for this appearance in the eyes at least of superficial observers, is, that real goodness is almost always accompanied by repose. There is less bluster and fuss—the well-oiled machinery of their minds moves without noise or effort, so that even its movement can scarcely be discerned;

and the height they have attained sets them above the little jars and jolts which are constantly upsetting those who keep down on the so-called *fast* roads of life.

Another reason there is which induces many persons to shrink from those who they may even acknowledge to be good, and that is, the deceptive appearance of the much-coveted quality, life. In fact, the natural instinct of every one prompts them to seek for and admire everything which impresses the idea of life most strongly on their minds. Hence the common impulse which induces persons to prefer the appearance of youth to that of age, and to admire the foolhardy, and those unthinking and reckless persons, who seem as if they did not believe in death.

This is quite natural; yet, unless we look below the surface, and seek for the indications of real life—of that enduring spirit which lives eternally—we shall only grasp a vain shadow, or a substance which, on nearer approach, will prove to be only a mass of fast-decaying corruption. Yet such is the deceptive uproar or dazzling movements of those who catch at present gratification without regard to its sinfulness, that

the beholders mistake it for life, and sometimes imagine it to be the fully enjoying and ever-enduring life for which we all seek.

There is also another impediment to the due appreciation of goodness, and that is, that one particular set of good people have acquired a bad name. I mean the so-called serious set which succeeded the Puritans. Although well meaning and highly conscientious, they earned for themselves and their followers this bad name by a disregard of that text in Scripture which urges us to seek "whatever things are lovely." It would seem as if the words must be expunged in some miraculous manner from the bibles they read, or rather that the word *lovely* must have been replaced by "*ugly*." And hence, also, is one great cause of the decay of real religious feeling and faith in a good, merciful, kind, and just Creator—a decay which entails a disregard for the cultivation and pursuit of real goodness and beauty.

* * * * *

I was never more fully convinced of the advantage of uttering one's thoughts, or rather of trying to put them into intelligible

language, than I was yesterday, when I saw some horrible-looking animals in a drop of water through a powerful microscope.

The sight of these animals preying upon each other—the conviction that it seemed to be quite a law of their nature—a necessity that they should devour each other, made me miserable. I trembled at the sight of this destruction, which made me dread annihilation or ever-renewed suffering, or the eventual power of evil over good—of strong evil passions over meek or suffering innocence !

Yet when I began to talk of this, I found myself most unexpectedly urging this very fact (the destruction of all things in *this world*) as a proof of the truth of Revelation, of the curse *intended* to be inflicted on *this* earth for man's disobedience, and furthermore as a proof of our individual responsibility—of the power we *each* possess to further or retard the cause of goodness and happiness—to diffuse peace and innocence around us, or to create crimes and woe !

I argued that each of us separately may possess something of the same power that Adam and Eve had, to propagate good or evil. We still possess free will, and although

our difficulty to keep the right path is increased by the curse we inherit from our first parents, yet our individual responsibility may be as great—our efforts may work for good or for evil on as large a scale for aught that we know.

If only ten righteous men had been found, Sodom would have been spared. But probably each person may have doubted, or may not have believed in his own individual responsibility. Yet, if they had been conscious of it—if the thought had struck some individuals among them, our sins—or rather, if the conviction had come home to any one of them—“*my* sins may cause the destruction of myself, and also that of the whole town, all *my* friends, acquaintances, children, and parents may be destroyed in consequence of *my* guilt,” might not then the doomed curse have been averted, and ten just persons found?

One of the strange animals we saw in that microscope was an atom which assumed a variety of forms. Its rapid changes recalled to my mind some of the revolving stars I saw in Lord Rosse’s telescope! In half a minute the tiny creature changes into the most opposite forms, and certainly in

the rapidity of its growth resembles nothing so much as its enormous counterpart—the revolving worlds. And this led me to consider the strange vagueness and uncertainty of what we call Time. How could we be induced to believe that this world might, by some exertion of God's will, be also tossed round another planet with equal swiftness? Yet why do we consider it impossible? In the same manner, why do we deny to the same power which causes those marvellously rapid changes in the little animal, or in the immense revolving worlds—why do we deny the capacity of the same power to have altered the strata of our own rocks, at different periods, with more or less rapidity?

Yet we still persist in maintaining that it must have taken as many centuries to move them formerly, and deposit the bones of animals under the successive strata, as it does to change their formation now, or within the records of history; whereas we possess no proof that time, or swiftness, before those historic ages, acted at all in the same degree. However, if persons like to believe that the movements of our world and its elements were always as slow as they

are now, it matters very little; it makes no difference in the truth of our revealed religion whether this world has existed at its present rate of progress for eight centuries, or eighty millions of centuries. At least, it will make no difference to those who have time and capacity to study our Scriptures, and the evidences of their truth both in history and *in* the Bible itself. But to those who have not either time or capacity to do so, the positive and yet *ever-changing assertions* they hear of our world's exact age, and of the period of man's creation, may, perhaps, be rather perplexing!

I have considered it right to read all sides to all questions, and I believe there are few persons who have read more of what has been written against Revelation, or sifted so deeply what has been said in all ages against its evidence, as well as in favour of its truth, as myself. And I only wish that the firm conviction of its truth, which has been the result in my mind, may help those to believe, who are more likely to hear the objections against it, than to seek for the proofs of its veracity.

CHAPTER V.

Still, God willing, I may obtain justice
For my father. Not yet does this foul deed slumber.

EURIPIDES.

EDWIN took a high degree, and returned to his father's house in London immediately afterwards. Eva had not seen him since his first meeting with Letitia (not having been in London at that time), and she perceived that some change had come over her son since they last met. He was happier, but it was a sort of solemn happiness, that appeared to make him more indifferent to the common occurrences, and, indeed, pleasures of life. And his health seemed to have suffered—most probably, she thought, from over-study. His father also was struck with the change; but as Edwin avoided the subject, they would not press him, and so he hid deep in his heart the secret of his life.

They both urged him to go to Ireland and visit Mr. Dromore, and to this he gladly consented. He longed to see the spot where Letitia was born. He could neither fly from her image, nor permit himself to look steadfastly upon it: he, as it were, gazed and shaded his eyes.

Upon his arrival at his grandfather's in Ireland, he was concerned to find that the reports which had reached his ears of the lamentable state of the peasantry on the De Lacy and O'Neil estates, owing to general mismanagement, were but too true. Since his abrupt departure from Eyrie Lodge, Morgan had been a regular absentee, and although his excellent management before that time had improved the property, yet, when the master's eye was withdrawn, everything relapsed into confusion.

Edwin had seen very little of Ireland, and, now that he had leisure, he wished to make a tour in the more wild and remote parts. After visiting all those places belonging to his own relations, he went to Tipperary, and through the romantic glens of the Galtee mountains.

He travelled on foot, and generally put

up for the night in some cabin ; for even in the most lawless parts strangers are sure to be welcome, although known to be English. He found, however, that the name of O'Neil was quite out of favour, therefore did not venture to disclose it unless he was asked.

One evening, after watching the red sun sink behind Galteemore, a fleecy white cloud appeared above the crest of the mountain behind him. In an almost incredibly short time (incredible to those unacquainted with Alpine storms), the before cloudless sky was overcast ; a sort of whirlwind swept down the side of the mountain, tearing up trees, scattering rocks, stones, and blinding dust in its wild course. He was glad to take refuge from its fury in a deserted dwelling, half hovel, half cave, which he descried under the ledge of an overhanging rock.

There was no window ; the doorway admitted at the same time light and air, and afforded egress for the smoke of the peat-fire, whose embers were still smouldering inside. The hovel contained no article of furniture whatever ; a few rolled-up pieces of old carpet in one corner, and a battered iron pot, were the only objects visible. At the darkest end the mouth of a sort of inner

cave appeared, half closed up with stones, which Edwin imagined might be the entrance to a secret still for whisky.

As it was now rapidly becoming night, and the rain and wind still continued, he despaired of reaching the village which had been his destination, and which he had seen far below him before entering the hut. So, wearied with his long day's walk, he wrapped his cloak round him, and was soon fast asleep, with his knapsack under his head.

When he awoke, the faint glimmer of a clouded moon shone through the doorway; he could hear the wind still howling, and the rain falling in gusts against the sides of the hut.

He must have lain awake, as he thought, about five minutes, when the driving clouds parted, and the moonlight streamed full into the room. But not upon vacancy! It disclosed the tall figure of a woman in a red cloak, standing in the centre of the hovel, her large dark eyes fixed upon him. The hood partly covered her head, but allowed the moonlight to fall on her face, and define with its ghastly light her wan features.

Edwin started up, and his heart beat thick and fast, for he remembered his mother's

description of the banshee. There was something in this perfectly motionless figure, the almost supernatural brilliancy of her eyes, the weird gaze she directed towards him, that seemed to paralyse his faculties and deprive him of the power of speech. At the same moment these words seemed to be projected into his brain, rather than uttered by a human voice: "Father of sons that shall be born in the Black Tower of Dermot, and greatest of all the O'Neils: go to Glenfinlan, the dwelling of the Widow O'More. She will tell in your ear how two little children were changed by the wicked blue beacon-light that burned on the tower of Glenmaurice. They lighted it in the dark o' the night, when a son was born to the Earl's false wife. For she and the base O'Neil had agreed in their dark deceit, that if a daughter were born to the Lady of Carrigroghan, the child should be taken away. And so the blue-eyed babe was carried over the mountains, and the black-eyed son of shame was brought to the tower of Dermot. But never will prosper that boy, the son of the Earl's false wife. Misfortune shall dog his path, and the base O'Neil be thwarted. Go—haste to Glenfinlan, the dwelling of the

dark O'More. There ye will find the writing of Roland O'Neil of Kiloran, which will give his fine broad lands to Henry O'Neil, your father. Low lies the head of the man that was murdered by Morgan O'Neil. Burning like flames in the grave of the slain are the words that will prove his guilt. Under the big black stone, in the lonesome glen of the fairies."

The fitful moonlight trembled for a second or two on the weird figure after the words had ceased, then a driving cloud swept over it, and all was dark. When, a few minutes afterwards, its rays struggled forth again, nothing was visible but the bare walls of the hovel, and the battered iron pot in the corner.

Edwin shuddered. He got up and looked round both inside and outside the hut, but no trace of any human being was to be seen. His next impulse was to go as soon as possible to Glenfinlan, and obtain the proofs of what the figure had asserted, to declare himself to the Widow O'More, and make her give up the lost Will by which his father could prove his right to Kiloran.

"But my hands are tied," he said to himself in reply, as he re-entered the hut. "I

cannot bring the matter to light. Everything combines to place within my grasp immense earthly happiness, and the chance of success in fair ambition. Exposure and forced restitution are the visible outlines of retributive justice to my uncle for long years of unprovoked hatred and injury against a brother—against my father. To let my mind dwell on pity for him would be tantamount to indulging in morbid sentiment. But his wife—my mother's earliest and best friend—she who has clung to that friendship with unchanging affection in spite of her husband's opposition and violent outbursts of anger; she who risked so much in her choice between opposing duties, when she rode across the mountains and the bog to go and persuade Mr. O'Neil of Kiloran to alter his Will for my father's sake; she must suffer for these things if they are disclosed. I cannot disclose them. But then, there is another side to the question as regards her. The alternative is between her own child and the child of another—of another woman and Morgan O'Neil. Nature revolts at this—and—and—opportunities never recur; and if I disregard this warning, I know not how much pressure may be

put upon Letitia—how far resistance may be morally possible—and so I should be an accomplice; I should negatively help to——”

The hot tingling blood rushed into his face, he paced the hut rapidly, and his breath came quick.

At length reflection demanded some definite course in the matter, and advice from some one not personally interested. The first person he thought of consulting was the lady commonly called by her friends “Aunt Mary.”

“She is almost the only person of my small acquaintance who never seems to look on one side at things,” he said to himself; “and this affair requires not merely wisdom to decide, but tact to carry out; for, if it is not managed wonderfully well, Roland will resist the evidence, and, by making it public perhaps, be the means of bringing his own father to trial on a charge of murder—the murder hinted at by the strange figure.”

He lay down again on the floor of the hut, trying, by the posture of repose, to produce something like the reality in his own mind. He lay there till dawn; then rose—cold, stiff, weary, and anxious. “I

will burden no one with this," he said, half aloud; "at least, not till I know more about it. I dare say the apparition was nothing more than an hallucination caused by fatigue and want of food. I will go to the Widow O'More at once, and try and find out from her; I will hire a jingle at the nearest village to take me to Carrigtown, and get a guide for the rest of the way."

In order to reach Glenfinlan he must go first to Carrigtown. So he proceeded down the mountain, and, after an hour's walk, reached a small, wretched-looking town at its foot, where he hired a jingle to take him as far on the way to Carrigtown as the poor starved horse could be induced to go.

It was no easy task to persuade the animal to set off at all, and the old plan of moving the wheels round from the back was resorted to; when the driver gravely remarked, "Och, he'll go as asy as the wind when once we're off, yer honour—it's only sulky he is for want o' work." At last they set off.

"Sure and there goes yer Established Church," said the driver, as they passed a detachment of soldiers outside the town. "Tis the tithes they collect thin at the

point of the bagonet which keeps it up. It's mighty little they'd get anyhow but for them red coats."

At the first hill the driver got off the box, and, opening the door of the jingle, banged it to again. This manœuvre being repeated more than once, Edwin inquired the reason.

"Whisht, yer honour—arraah, thin; spake softly now. I put the door to in order to make the baste think yer honour had got down, as then he'd go more asy like."

Edwin took this hint, although the rain was pouring in torrents; and, by thus dismounting at all the ascents, they got on better than he could have anticipated, while the pace at which they rushed through the crowded streets of the next town was wonderful. Groups of men and women, pigs, geese, and horses, were scattered on all sides, and shrieks and curses were showered upon them; but they got safely through it all, without apparently having run over any animal or human being. After this last effort at speed (made, like many an Irish effort, when it was *not* wanted) the poor horse was quite done up, and Edwin

suggested that they had better return to the town and get another conveyance.

"Ah, now, yer honour would not be so ungrateful as to lave the poor baste just when he's come so illigant through the town? Be asy now a bit, and he'll go as quick as lightning."

The horse, after proceeding a mile or two farther, settled the question for himself by laying down in the road and refusing to get up; so Edwin paid the driver, and, leaving him with his horse, proceeded to make the rest of his way on foot.

He had obtained, as he thought, pretty accurate information from the car-driver, but at last, coming to a place where four roads met, and no information being obtainable from the defaced and mouldering sign-post, he was fain to take that which, judging from the points of the compass, would most likely lead him to Carrigtown.

After walking for a couple of hours or more across a bare and desolate country—now up one hill, then down another, then skirting the edge of an apparently interminable bog, the conviction forced itself upon his mind that he had taken the wrong

turning. It was no use to retrace his steps, for of the three roads yet untried he was as ignorant as of this one, therefore he hurried on in the hope of meeting with some habitation. At last the straight line of sea came in view, and the next turning in the road showed him the dark roofs of a small fishing village skirting the shore.

He soon learnt that he was now almost as far from Carrigtown as when he had left Galteemore at daybreak, and as no conveyance of any sort was to be had, he was obliged to rest there, determined to proceed by water round the coast to Carrigtown as soon as one of the fishing-boats should return, which were that afternoon all gone out to sea.

CHAPTER VI.

For truly much misleading hope
Is a source of benefit to many men,
While to others it is the deceit of light-minded desire.
But upon man, all unconscious, ruin stealthily creeps
Till the fire scorches his foot before he perceives its approach.
For wisely has the illustrious saying been uttered,
That evil appears sometimes to be good
To him whose mind
A god is leading into misfortune.

SOPHOCLES.

THAT same evening Aunt Mary arrived at Dingleford Castle. The next morning, about the hour when Edwin, having landed at Carrigtown, was toiling up the steep ascent to Glenfinlan, she mounted the little pony and went to see Father Murphy.

She found him just returning to the village, having been summoned to the cottage of the Widow O'More, and she was sorry to hear that the strange old woman had died suddenly at daybreak that morning, without having ever made a "clean breast" of it to Father Murphy, who did not arrive in time to hear her confession.

He had often reminded her of the promise she had made him to do so, but he had always failed to extract any intelligible account of the death, or, as she darkly hinted, the murder of her brother-in-law, Michael Hennessy, near Eyrie Lodge. So, as the good father could never ascertain the truth of her hints, he judged it more prudent to say nothing of them to any one.

When, however, Aunt Mary expressed the great disappointment she felt at the death of the old woman, and hinted that she rather expected she might have thrown some light upon an occurrence about which she felt great interest, Father Murphy begged that she would tell him what it was.

She then informed him of Nesta's endeavour to clear Henry's character in the eyes of old Mr. Roland O'Neil, and of the Will he had signed in his favour; of the subsequent disappearance of the Will, and of a figure resembling the Widow O'More's lost daughter having been seen near the lawyer's house. "I need not remind you," she continued, "of the strange fascination which Morgan O'Neil can exercise over people, and therefore I think it quite probable he may have persuaded Nelly O'More, with the

promise of some bribe, to do his bidding at that time."

"I wish I had known all this before," said Father Murphy; "it might have helped me to get more truth out of that old Widow O'More. However, what's gone can't be helped—only now, if we stir ourselves to learn the fate of that Will, maybe ye'll hear more than ye bargained for. Still, as yer honour's a raal friend to the family, I may as well tell ye all I know about something that may throw a light on that Will."

The good father then related all that was detailed in a former chapter, when, about twelve years before, the body was found under the "big black stone again the water-fall."

"And is it there still?" eagerly inquired Aunt Mary.

"As far as anything I know to the contrary I suppose it must be—the peasantry have a superstition about that fairies' glen which has hitherto kept it untrodden for many centuries—and it's a blessin' that it is so, and I only wish that people would think that all the glens belonged to the fairies, and then our poor country would not have been so stripped of trees as it is now!"

When Aunt Mary heard these details she saw the difficulty of making any investigation about the Will was much increased. Yet, if Morgan had really murdered the man, he ought to be convicted of the crime.

"'Tis a difficult matter indeed, I see," said Father Murphy, who divined what doubts were passing in her mind. "Ye think that the O'Neil may have been unjustly accused of this by some one who had a grudge—who wished to be revenged on him. And I am inclined to think this the more probable, because no accusation has been brought against him all these years. And it's for you to know best whether his lordship is likely to have done it."

"I can't tell. I would rather not think so, for his dear wife's sake; perhaps we ought not to drag the offence into light."

"But I see you think it possible he may have committed the crime—you can't decave an old priest that has confessed all the parish round for the last thirty years, and I think that I never was taken in but once."

"And that was in the case of that mysterious girl, Nelly O'More."

"The more shame for me it was, and sure a sore and sad sorrow I've had for that

same! And now ye may just use me as ye think best about all this. I'm ready to appear, and I'll undertake to have Mick Malowney and Jerry Dorogan at any moment, and sure they'll tell the thruth and nothing else, I'll be bound, for they're God-fearing chaps both of 'em. And ye can have the place searched if ye think right, and the body found."

She then inquired what had become of the old woman's grandson—the beautiful boy Connor—whose likeness to Morgan had first excited their suspicions many years ago.

"Oh, the unfortunate spalpeen! it's he that's spoilt entirely by those Peep-o'-Day Boys."

Poor Aunt Mary was almost as much perplexed what use to make of the startling intelligence she had received as Edwin had been. When she left Father Murphy's house, to her surprise she met Edwin coming down the village street. He was so absorbed in his own thoughts that he did not at first see her, but when he did so, an expression of glad surprise lighted up his countenance. She was evidently the person of all others he wished at that moment to see.

"I have just been up to Glenfinlan in search of an old woman—a Widow O'More," he said; "but I found that she died this morning. I must go back to England in a few days—and I must speak to you—I wish to ask your advice on a subject most terribly important to several people in whom you are interested—especially, perhaps, to Lady Ardfinnan."

He then rapidly described the appearance and words of the figure in the red cloak, and paused. Aunt Mary remained silent for a few seconds, and then replied in a voice that contradicted the calmness of her manner :

"I knew a good deal of this before—or, rather, I knew some of it, and had strong reasons to fear and suspect the rest. I will write to Nesta at once—No! the letter may fall into Morgan's hands, and I hardly know how much to fear from him in the event of his being brought to bay. Poor Morgan! I verily believe he might have been very different; but all his great force of character has been employed in evil—even his marriage with that angel, Nesta, has helped to pull him downwards by rousing his proud resentment against his conviction of injuring her. I will write to Florentine, your aunt's

maid. I have known her these five-and-twenty years, and have reason to believe that she can help us in the search after probabilities. Moreover, she formerly lived with Lady Glenmaurice."

"But what of this marriage," said Edwin, speaking very rapidly, and averting his face. "What if——?"

"I don't much believe in it," answered Aunt Mary. "Lady Glenmaurice is decidedly against it."

"But what if it should be hurried on, and take place first?"

"Not likely—not possible," she answered. "Remember, there is the coming of age: there is no time for them to do anything before that."

"But neither father nor son can bear any obstacle, and with all the means that——"

"No. If the story is true, Morgan and Honoria can never allow the marriage to take place. Do you suppose, now, that they would let Roland marry his own sister? And, if it is *not* true, why——"

She did not conclude the sentence, but the expression of Edwin's countenance did.

CHAPTER VII.

Am I deceived, or do I hear some wail of lamentation
Now sounding through the house?
How can I explain it?

* * * * *
Some one has shrieked, and the woful sound
Is not without meaning, but full of deep sorrow,
And something new happens to the house.

SOPHOCLES.

THE coming of age was to be kept as a high holiday in every place belonging to the O'Neils and De Lacys. In the broad lands of Yorkshire, and the wild mountains of Shievedhue, in hamlet and farm-house, in town and country, great and costly were the preparations for rejoicing; but greatest of all in the new splendid castle of Dermot.

The marble ball-room was finished, and had excited the admiration of tourists from many parts of the world. It had been a show place for several years, and great was the wonder expressed that such a princely dwelling should be deserted by its owners.

The family arrived a fortnight before the important day. There were preparations for a banquet in the great banqueting-hall, and for dancing in the ball-room, and for fireworks on the mountain, and the entire castle was to be illuminated on the outside.

Guests were to be lodged at Carrigroghan, as well as Dermot Castle. Lord Mowbray, and many relations on both sides, had promised to come over to attend the fêtes. Roland still indulged his fancy for Letitia, and thus, perhaps, cultivated in a small degree his better nature. Good and evil had combined to rouse that fancy. An instinct of affection predisposed him to fall in love, an instinct of opposition fixed the choice on one whose mother seemed to deny her to him.

It was near sunset when they arrived at the castle. Nesta anxiously watched her husband's face as they approached it. He seemed pleased at all the improvements that had been made, and with the way in which his wishes had been carried out. He walked out on the terrace with his son, and pointed out the recent additions.

"There is the place where the mad woman fell in?" asked Roland, as they ap-

proached the spot where Nelly O'More met her death twelve years before.

"Yes," answered Morgan, with a strange expression in his eyes which made Nesta tremble. "Yes—she fell down," he said, fiercely; then, after a pause, he added, in a softer tone, "Poor Nelly."

Roland looked at him with surprise. He never could understand his father.

"Had you ever known her before?" he inquired.

"What is that to you?" said Morgan, fiercely. "What right have you to pry into my affairs?" and he pushed his son almost rudely away from him, then left the terrace.

No guests were expected until the following week, except Aunt Mary, who had promised to come the day after they arrived.

"I am going up to the Eagle's Tower," said Nesta to her son, "to see if Aunt Mary's apartment is properly prepared for her reception."

"I will go with you," said Roland, who had been cowed by his father's words and manner, and somewhat awestruck by the contemplation of that fearful abyss from which he had been so miraculously rescued.

"I will come with you, for although this is the most splendid place I have ever seen, yet somehow it makes me feel lonely—I suppose it is that dark treeless glen, with its black rocks, and dark, ever-roaring waters."

They walked on in silence, and passed through several passages, until they came to the winding staircase that led up to the Eagle's Tower.

"I should like to know my father's history," said Roland, as they ascended the stairs.

Nesta shuddered; yet she said in a composed voice, "His history is very simple, dear Roland. He is not happy, because he has not cultivated a taste for true happiness. That is all. Perhaps something may occur to open his eyes to see what that is; I am powerless to do so—do not let me be equally powerless in your case: guard——"

"Yes, yes, I know what you are going to say," interrupted Roland. "But I have done my best to do right, and if she won't have anything to say to me, it will be her fault if I turn out badly."

"No, it will not," answered Nesta, firmly. "Dearest Roland, that is not the way to

look at it; I implore you to search carefully into your own feelings, and——”

“Hark! what is that sound,” he said, “like distant music.”

They had now reached the platform over the terrace, and were leaning against the stone balustrade. It was already too dark to see the distant view, for it was a cloudy day; but the opposite side of the mountain was clearly discernible.

“There is some one singing—but what is the matter, mother?”

Nesta had turned very pale, and she trembled.

Roland appeared momentarily softened; then again his countenance assumed its yearly-increasing expression of reckless scorn, and he said, with a sneering laugh:

“There is said to be a banshee in our family—perhaps this is it. Hark! it is coming nearer; what a strange kind of wail, and look! there is a red hood—just there, by that rock over the torrent. It moves——”

“Ah! Roland.”

“Hush! we can almost hear her words.”

“It is,” thought Nesta, “the same red hood, the same low wailing voice that I

have heard before—before all the misfortunes of my life. Can Nelly O'More have been saved, or is it her perturbed spirit come to warn—to terrify those whom she hated in her life?"

"You are horror-struck, mother; but you don't seem surprised. You have seen that figure—you have heard that voice before."

"Yes, I have. It was she who murdered your little sister, who held you over the abyss—it was she who was drowned in the torrent."

A wild, plaintive song, or rather wail in music, floated before them in the distance; and they could distinguish these words:

I'll come for the vengeance,
On the birthday I'll come.

"Do not say anything of this to your father," said Nesta, as the sounds died away, followed by an unearthly shriek and clapping of hands, that were prolonged by the mountain echoes.

"But you will?"

"Yes, I will; at least I think so. I will first consult Aunt Mary. But we must hasten down to see if the postern-gate is locked, just at the base of this tower, which

leads down to the Mermaid's Cave." And then she described to him how the strange woman had come up and locked the door, and found him in the nursery.

"And you are sure it is the very same?"

"That voice, the figure, all resemble; but come, or it will be too dark."

They groped their way down, found it safely locked, and Nesta took the key away with her.

"She may have another plan, perhaps, and we must be cautious. I had better tell your father at once, if we can find him."

But they could not, and it was not until nearly twelve o'clock, just as they were retiring to rest, that he came in. He seemed quite to have recovered his good humour, laughed and talked with his son, was full of plans and projects for the fête, and said he had ridden to Carrigtown to see his agent, who gave good accounts of the property and of the state of his rent-roll.

Nesta had not the heart to mar this happiness by a narrative of the apparition, and dreaded that, if she were to tell it, it would bring on one of his fits of depression, from which she had often suffered so much of late. But when they were alone together

she summoned up courage to describe what she had seen.

He laughed, would not allow there could be any connexion between it and the lost Nelly O'More. "Many women in the country round have red hoods, and they all sing a wail," he said. "Nothing so common. I dare say my agent has offended some cottager by pressing for rent, and so the wife came to threaten vengeance. But they would not really do any harm. It is impossible Nelly O'More could have been saved—quite impossible."

"It is quite true, many women do wear the red hood," thought Nesta, endeavouring to convince herself that he was right, and that she need not apprehend any fresh misfortune. But so vividly had this appearance and the plaintive voice reminded her of the awful events which it presaged before, that she could not close her eyes for hours.

A bright morning at last dawned, and she rose early. She found Morgan and her son in the breakfast-room, beaming with health and spirits, intending to start, as soon as they had breakfasted, for a hunt on the mountains, where all the neighbourhood

would probably be assembled to greet their arrival, and partake of the sport. Morgan had never appeared to be so happy for years, as he looked now, and he said to her, as he mounted his horse :

“ I am so glad to think you will have Aunt Mary here soon to help you. Tell her I think her friend Lord Mowbray will like to have the tapestry-rooms in the south wing. But she will be the best judge of his taste, so make her choose the apartment she thinks he will like best. Good-by ;” and with a half-smile and a loving expression in his eyes, which she had scarcely ever seen directed to herself before, he rode off. Roland followed, and she watched their retreating forms through the archway and over the drawbridge.

“ I wonder whether he really loves me at last,” thought Nesta, as she entered the castle, and walked up to look at the tapestry-rooms in the south wing which her husband had mentioned. She had not seen them before, for that south wing was not finished when they were last at the castle. She found a suite of three rooms, with beautifully carved ceilings and oak chimney-pieces, the walls covered with specimens of

old Gobelin tapestry. The first contained a collection of books, ranged in low bookshelves all round the room, and had an oriel window filled with old painted glass. The next was a small dressing-room, and the last a bedroom, with a large bow-window which almost formed another small room, and looked upon a fine view over the glen. Above these were servants' rooms, and over them the leads, to which a narrow winding staircase conducted up a small turret. Round the leads were ranged boxes containing flowers and evergreens. And in the little turret, at the end over the staircase, there was a small room with three windows looking on different views, and this was fitted up as a boudoir with materials for writing and drawing, and a telescope, &c.

"How charmed Lord Mowbray will be with this," thought Nesta. And again she admired the rooms as she went down through them, and examined the oak carvings and tapestry. Before she had finished her examination of their rare beauty, she heard a carriage drive into the court-yard, and knew it must be Aunt Mary.

It was. She ran down and brought her up

immediately to see this new part of the castle. "I am so glad to think Mowbray will have these charming rooms," said Nesta; "I feel sure he will be pleased with them, and glad to see that I am happy at last; for I really feel that Morgan loves me now. But how grave you look," continued she. "Dearest Aunt Mary, you don't seem pleased with this apartment, and Morgan's kindness in having thought of selecting it for Lord Mowbray—the person of whom he was so long jealous, or rather prejudiced against. And I assure you he was quite sincere in his wish that Lord Mowbray should come over."

"Ah—yes—I believe that," said Aunt Mary; "I am sure Lord Mowbray will be delighted with these rooms."

"Yes, but you are not so happy about it all as you should be. Do you know I have never seen Morgan so like his original self as he was this morning—so like the Morgan of old, as I first saw him on this very spot. I mean in the ruins that stood here, when he sprang over the chasm and frightened Aunt Lawrence and me out of our wits as we sat under the Mermaid's Rock. When he took leave of me this morning, he had that

same loving, glowing expression, that brilliant look in his eyes, which is the chief characteristic of the O'Neils. And of late years it has been so sadly dimmed, as if a dark cloud veiled his eyes. Have you not remarked it?"

"I have, indeed," said Aunt Mary, with a heavy sigh.

Poor Aunt Mary! she could not endure to dash the newly-awakened hopes to the ground, yet she had fully resolved to tell Nesta all she knew. But should she now defer it? After all, the story might be a fabrication of his enemies. Some one might have got hold of the stolen Will, and thus made a string of false accusations, founded upon the idea that Morgan had concealed the existence of it. The supposition of the children having been changed, may have arisen from the likeness of Letitia (as far as fair hair and blue eyes went) to Nesta; and the well-known anxiety of Morgan for an heir, may have suggested the change to the imaginative Irish, coupled as it would be in their minds with his suspected intrigue with Lady Glenmaurice, who was well known to have been his first love.

All this passed through Aunt Mary's mind, whilst she seemed to be examining the oak carvings and the Gobelin tapestry; and she resolved to postpone her intended disclosure.

"At all events, let Nesta be happy for this one day," she thought; "let her enjoy the sight of all this beauty and magnificence without any alloy." This course being decided on, Aunt Mary gave herself up to the pleasure of looking at the improvements Morgan had made; for her peculiar disposition, or as J. Paul Richter would say, her "ever-green mind," caught at all the means of happiness within her reach, with the fresh and renovating eagerness of early life. "We are always living on volcanoes," thought she; "our life, and the lives of those most dear to us, must always hang upon a thread; only we cannot see it so plainly as I see this particular catastrophe which seems hanging over their heads; and if it comes, nothing that I or Nesta can do will avert the misfortune; therefore, I will not let the dread of it interfere with our present pleasure."

CHAPTER VIII.

In a just cause it is allowable to be high spirited.

This man is my enemy, but sometimes noble.

SOPHOCLES.

NESTA had been so revived by Morgan's joyful kindness, that she almost forgot her terror at the strange apparition of the preceding evening, and her sleepless night—for there was so much to see and to show Aunt Mary, that she felt no fatigue. The pietra dura walls of the ball-room particularly delighted them. Every compartment was different in design and colour; every group of flowers and fruit were admirable imitations of nature in its most graceful forms and combinations.

Not until the shadows of evening began to fall and Nesta followed Aunt Mary up to her own apartment in the Eagle's Tower, did she remember with a shudder that it

was the time and place where she had seen the mysterious figure.

"Oh, do not venture out on the battlements," said Nesta; "I was up there yesterday evening with Roland, and—oh, only think that I have not yet told you! But the fact was, I shrank from the thought, because I would not give way to apprehension; it was so pleasant to be entirely happy." Then she related what they had seen and heard.

"And did you tell Morgan?"

"Yes; but he thought nothing of it. He said, what was very true, that there are so many red hoods, and that many of the peasants sing that sort of wail."

"And it produced no unpleasant effect on him—it did not give rise to any fear or apprehension in his mind?"

"Certainly not; at least, I imagine it could not have had that effect; otherwise, he could not have been so happy this morning."

The next few days passed in the same smooth manner.

Edwin O'Neil had returned to England after his interview with Aunt Mary; for, although invited to the fêtes, he did not feel

that his presence would be welcome to either Lord Ardfinnan or his son.

The following week Lord Mowbray and some other guests arrived, and then there was so much to show them in the castle and neighbourhood, such pleasant expeditions to Dingleford Castle and Bay, the beautiful gardens of the highly-decorated Carrigroghan, the wild and savage scenery of Glenfinlan, and the Shievedhue mountains, that their time was fully occupied. Nesta and Aunt Mary greatly enjoyed the wondering admiration, the exclamations of delight, which a visit to these interesting places for the first time called forth from their old friends.

Then they took them to the marble quarries at Shievedhue; and lastly, an expedition to Eyrie Lodge was planned.

They started early, for the distance was great, and the road mountainous. Morgan said he had that day some pressing business in another direction, and could not accompany them; but servants had been sent on to prepare luncheon at Eyrie Lodge.

Aunt Mary had never seen it, and her love of the picturesque was gratified beyond measure at the wild scene. They walked up

to the waterfall, and then she regarded with mingled curiosity and horror "the big black stone by the riven oak."

"What a place for banditti," said Lord Mowbray; "it reminds one of some of the accounts one reads of Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest. There is something almost awful to me in this appearance of undisturbed solitude. I feel as if some murder had been committed here."

"And Morgan did not come!" thought Aunt Mary, with a shudder.

"I dare say it is haunted by the ghost of some murdered person," said Lord Mowbray, "and that is why the people have left it untouched. And yet you were so happy here," he continued, turning to Nesta. "It must be your heavenly temper and disposition that keeps away all spirits of evil from you; otherwise, I am certain you would not have enjoyed this remote spot so much."

"I think we had better go back to the house now," said Aunt Mary, rather hurriedly. "It is some distance off, and we have fifteen miles to drive home."

"Oh, but I must show you where Letitia fell down the mountain, and where she clung to the arbutus-tree stem," said Nesta.

“ Yes,” said Roland ; “ and where I—— But who can that be up there ? What a fine-built man. There,” he continued, turning to Lord Mowbray ; “ surely that must be your friend Robin Hood ! ”

The party all looked up with astonishment at the apparently gigantic figure which stood on the pointed summit of a high rock just above their heads. The man seemed to scan the features of all the party with mingled curiosity and defiance, as if he were searching among them for some acquaintance, or wished to divine their thoughts and intentions. There was something regal in the attitude of calm repose in which he stood on the narrow and slippery edge of the projecting rock, on a space where none but the most experienced climber with the steadiest foot could stand with safety, and certainly none of the party, not even the active and well-made Roland, could have ventured to follow the stranger to the dizzy height.

Roland longed to speak—to ask him who he was, and why he remained up there in that perilous position ; but there was something commanding, something ferociously defiant and untamed in that handsome face,

which seemed to prevent any interrogation or friendly advances.

The man seemed to single out Roland more especially for his observation, for his large piercing eyes dwelt long upon the young man's face, and Roland fancied that the animosity which at first was the preponderating expression was gradually exchanged for a look of something between pity and contempt. At last a sudden idea seemed to strike the stranger. He uttered one of those loud shrieks which, handed down from father to son, may probably have been, in the old times, the war-cry of the ancient Irish, and brandishing his shillelagh round his head, made that peculiar jump which the peasants execute when about to fight. But the manner in which it was performed upon that narrow conical point of rock, where there seemed scarcely room for his feet, produced the effect of something almost supernatural on the beholders. After this wild freak, he lighted on his feet as steadily as if he were standing on a plain, and said, in a voice that echoed like thunder amid the neighbouring rocks :

“ Roland O'Neil—for I know yer of our

family by the starry light of yer eyes—come up to me here; for, if ye're a true O'Neil, there's room for two of us on this rock, and I'll spake words in yer ear that maybe you'd rather other folks would not hear."

Roland was about to spring forward and climb up the mountain-side, when Lord Mowbray and several other gentlemen of the party held him forcibly back.

"Ha! ha! I thought their honours would not let the lad venture," shouted the stranger, while he jumped in wild glee, first on one leg and then on the other, whirling the shillelagh in circles round his head. "Ha! ha! the boy must be taken care of, must he? His life is too precious to be risked in such a place as this! But never fear, yer honours; I did not mean to harm the poor boy, for he's of my own kith and kin, though we're both on the wrong side. Ha! ha! I'll see yer again soon, though, Master Roland. Be asy now, darlint, and don't break loose from the gentlemen. I'll take another opportunity of spaking in yer ear." And then, uttering a loud, shrill whoop, he jumped high, and turning round in the air, sprang down behind the rocks

and disappeared, while the distant echoes still continued to repeat the wild war-whoop.

"Let me loose—I will follow him, I will hear what he has to say," cried Roland, making wild efforts to break loose from those who held him back; but Lord Mowbray was determined he should not escape.

"Foolish boy! can you not see the man is mad? He was endeavouring to entice you up there for some evil purpose, and would probably have cast you headlong down."

"Well, but surely we ought to go after him—we ought to hear what he wants to say. Come, we'll all go up the mountain and see if we can't discover where he is gone."

"Oh, do not let him go!" said Nesta, imploringly. "I think—I am sure I know who that man is, and it will be no use. Dear Roland, pray do not venture. He belongs to a wild set of people they call Peep-o'-Day Boys, up in the mountains."

"Well, but at all events let us go up there, and see if we can stand where he did."

Lord Mowbray assented to this, and three or four of the most active gentlemen of the

party climbed up the least steep part of the mountain, and, by making a long circuit, reached the highest part of the main crag, as one might call it, from whence a very narrow causeway of rock led along up to the huge black conical stone that formed the highest point of all. Nesta, with Aunt Mary and several other ladies, remained below. Aunt Mary said she did not wonder at their wishing to ascertain how the man had got up there; and, to tranquillise Nesta's fears, she reminded her that Lord Mowbray was strong enough to prevent Roland from going where he considered it really dangerous. They soon saw the party reappear on the summit of the main mountain. There they stopped, and Nesta saw that Roland was trying to venture along the narrow causeway, but Lord Mowbray prevented it.

"No, it is really not safe, because the rock itself looks as if a touch would send it down the mountain-side, and then it would inevitably kill your mother and all those who are standing underneath. See, the stones are quite loose."

"But that magnificent fellow actually danced upon it," said Roland; "surely, if

it bore his weight it will carry mine, for he is nearly a head taller; and besides, he was whirling his heavy shillelagh."

"But you do not know how much he may have undermined its foundations. He may have wished to lure you up there on purpose to crush the whole party."

Roland was reluctantly obliged to confess that might have been the case; moreover, the stones appeared so tottering, and there seemed to be so many large loose stones on each side of the causeway, that he hesitated to risk his mother's life and that of all the party who stood beneath.

They, of course, looked in all directions, but could see no traces of the stranger; and, after admiring the view, they came down and joined the ladies, when the whole party went back to the lodge, where luncheon had long been waiting for them.

CHAPTER IX.

Achilles. Aspiringly my soul rises to the highest flights of magnanimity,
And has learnt both how to be grieved at misfortunes,
And to rejoice with moderation when prosperity is extreme.
For such men have the prudence to live rightly
All through their lives with a wise mind.
Now are there some occasions wherein it is pleasant not to think
overmuch,
And there are other occasions wherein it is useful to have discretion.
And I, who was brought up in the house of a most religious man,
Chiron, have acquired the habit of extreme sincerity.
EURIPIDES.

EDWIN O'NEIL returned to London, after his fortnight's tour in Ireland. He would not afford himself any more time for recreation ; for he intended at once to commence his studies for the law. A few days after his arrival in the little house in the dark street, he thought he would allow himself the pleasure of going to see Signor Collini. He knew his aunt had promised he would visit the artist when he had an opportunity.

That studio retained a hallowed place in his memory, to which his mind reverted in

moments of despondency, and he sought refuge there, as in a sanctuary from whence Letitia's image had power to banish every disagreeable or unhappy thought of feeling.

"Of course she must be out of town now, at this dull season," he thought; "there is no possibility of such a fortunate chance as I met with the last time. Perhaps Collini himself will be absent; however, I should like to see the picture he was painting to illustrate my lucubrations—I did not even glance at it on that day."

On reaching the house, he saw that the shutters were all open, and therefore hoped he was in town.

"Signor Collini is at home, sir," the servant said who opened the door, and Edwin was shown up into his studio.

"Ah, Monsieur Nile, the fine poet—I am most glad to behold you—I have long been hoping and wishing for a visit. And how you have improved your looks, too, since we met."

Collini looked at him so hard—partly on account of his pictorial face, and partly on account of the poem—that Edwin began to feel uncomfortably conscious respecting the secret reasons of his visit.

“ I have been travelling in Ireland,” he said at length, rather abruptly.

“ Ha! travelling in Ireland. I would like to see that country,” answered Collini. “ They tell me there are some very beautiful faces there, too.”

“ In the west, not elsewhere, I think,” said Edwin, his eyes wandering vaguely about the room.

“ My last picture is, I think, my best,” said Collini, taking him into an adjoining room, and showing him a portrait on an easel. But it is not quite done. “ Ah, you know her? Yes, you met her here that day, I remember quite well—you think it like? It no finished yet—I expect her every moment to come for her finishing sitting.

“ Ah!” thought the quick-sighted artist as he beheld the rising colour on the young man’s face. “ You know her well, then?”

“ I only met her once before that day.”

“ Then do you love at first sight? No wonder. Pardon me, I could not help reading it in your face. But I discreet—no speak—no think of it—for she quite like one saint—one angel——”

“ And is she really coming here to-day?”

inquired Edwin, with a kind of vague feeling that he ought, perhaps, to go away before she arrived.

“ Yes, and you no pleased to see her ? Ah, I understand ; she knows nothing, and perhaps you think that parents not pleased if you are not rich. But Monsieur est Poète, he make his way in the world, and all proud to have him for son-in-law. Dare, she drive up to the door ; not go away, and I will tell you your fortune,” he added, with a smile. “ I have some turn for magic—I have been called a magician—I will know what she thinks, and what she feel.”

Letitia came in alone, and the slight start and glowing cheek when she discovered that Edwin was there, might have perhaps betrayed to a less deep reader of human nature than Signor Collini, that his surmises were right.

“ Lady Ardfinnan told me you were in Ireland,” she said, as if to account to herself for the surprise into which she had been betrayed at seeing him there.

“ I have been in Ireland, and only returned the day before yesterday.”

“ Then you saw the Ardfinnans ?”

“ No, I just missed them ; but I saw the

dear old lady they call Aunt Mary, who was going to stay at Dermot Castle for the fêtes."

"And how was it you did not remain there also for them?"

"I had not time to give myself a longer holiday; but I enjoyed my tour in the wild mountains extremely."

"Ah, how I should like to see Ireland again—I love it, I was so much happier there when I had the good fortune to tumble down the mountain and break my leg. Ah, that happy time, when I was confined to the sofa, and could not move for six weeks, and Lady Ardfinnan was always with me, in that enchanting Eyrie Lodge!"

Letitia had taken her place on the chair of state, and Signor Collini began to paint.

But she looked so much more beautiful than he had ever before seen her, that he longed to begin another picture.

"She is satisfied," he thought; "she see no impediment; and certainly there is no cloud on his face either—no presage of evil."

It was this same conviction which imparted to her whole form its radiancy; for she read on Edwin's face a look of hopeful

confidence in happiness that she had not seen before. They were all silent for some moments; it was as if they were almost afraid to break the spell of blissful hopes which they both experienced.

Signor Collini was the first to speak; he inquired of Edwin whether he was writing anything else.

"I am afraid I shall have even less time now than when I was at Oxford, for I am reading for the Bar."

"I must paint another picture. I no satisfied with this. I am sure Lady Dumbleton will say I did not do mademoiselle justice. Is it not so, Mr. O'Neil? Miladi much more lovely than this picture; it have not that sublime expression. You know I paint this for Lady Dumbleton," added he, when he saw that his indiscreet question had embarrassed his beautiful sitter.

"Yes, it was very kind of Lady Dumbleton to wish for it," said Letitia, "and she made me promise when she left London that I would come. I was so glad to stay in town with papa. Dr. Morland did not think he could stand the journey to Scotland, and so I obtained leave to remain in town with him."

“And my lady mother no returned yet?”

“No; she will probably be away for some time. She has been making a round of visits to her friends and relations in Yorkshire and Northumberland, and is now in Herefordshire.”

Letitia was alone with her poor old father, in that large dismantled house in Grosvenor-square. The carpets had been taken up in the principal rooms, and the furniture all piled in the middle, and though few things are more depressing than to live in a house thus put into curl-papers in the month of September, yet Letitia had never been so thoroughly happy before, always excepting the golden days of her childhood at Eyrie Lodge.

She had the undisturbed enjoyment of being with her father, and of having the disposal of her own time. And now—now that she had seen Edwin again, and read something in his countenance which made her supremely happy, her enjoyment of a dull London September, in a deserted house, seemed complete.

But it was not destined to be of long duration, for that very afternoon a circumstance occurred which effectually disturbed it.

After she returned home from Signor Collini's studio, she took her usual afternoon walk in Grosvenor-square, by the side of her father, who was wheeled by a little page in his garden-chair.

There was no one in the square but themselves, for every house in it was shut up. Letitia had brought a book, and as her father seemed to enjoy the shade, they remained for some time under one of the trees. She sat down near him and read. The book was one of Edwin's, which he had taken to present to Signor Collini, and Letitia begged to be allowed to read it. She became so absorbed in its contents, that she did not hear that footsteps were approaching near, till a dark shadow passed over the page, and, looking up, she met the staring gaze of Lord Bandon riveted upon her.

"Is that a very interesting book?" he said, as he sat down on the bench at her side. "I really—I never could feel interested in what I read. But it becomes you—you are looking more beautiful than ever." Letitia instantly rose, and approaching her father's chair, told the page they were going home.

"Ah, then I will come too. I am so de-

lighted to find anybody at home in this dull town. I was obliged to come up for some law business ; but I am rewarded for all the trouble it gives me by finding you."

"Would he actually force himself into the house?" thought Letitia. "If so, she had better remain in the square." So she asked her father if he would prefer to remain out, and they took a turn or two round the walk.

But Lord Blandon followed quite near, and his words and looks were so disagreeable to her, that Letitia was at her wits' end what to do, and it was getting almost too late for her father to be out. At last, she resolved to go home, and oppose his following her into the house. She would say there was no room in a proper state to receive any visitors in ; that there was only her father's dressing-room, and he must be kept quiet.

All this she said, when she saw he was preparing to follow her into the house.

"Very well ; I suppose it is late now, nearly time for dinner ; but I will call to-morrow morning, and there must be some room to see me in," he said, with a sort of knowing look at the footman who opened the door.

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Letitia did not like this footman (he was, except the page, the only male servant left in town), for she often detected something insolent in his manner.

The moment the door was shut upon Lord Blandon, she gave orders that he was not to be admitted at all.

"Very well, my lady. Am I to say you are hout?"

"Yes."

But she could not succeed in dispelling a disagreeable apprehension that he would get into the house; that the footman would be induced to let him in. And in that case, what could she do?

Of course, her poor father would be present, but he was quite unable to comprehend what was going on. He would be no protection to her against the annoying advances of that odious man. Nor were there any friends in London to whom she could apply for advice or assistance in this emergency.

No one?

Yes there was, she thought, with a delight; but she could not tell him. It would be impossible for him to be of any use in this case; at least, no further use than that of affording the happy thoughts caused by the conviction that he cared for her.

This was, fortunately, the last impression on her mind when she went to sleep that night; but when she woke the next morning, there was a weight of care, and a depressing apprehension of some misfortune connected with the recollection of that dreadful Lord Blandon, that she could not shake off.

She hastened to her father's room, in hopes that the sight of his dear venerable face would console her—that face, which could no longer be troubled by any of the changes of this uncertain world—and therefore, on her, produced the same effect as if she were contemplating that of a saint. For there is something inexpressibly touching in the sight of a person who has “fought the good fight,” who is unconscious of what is passing around, and we feel as if the spirit had already entered into its eternal rest. And although for some inscrutable purpose the still suffering body is permitted to remain in a sort of half-life, yet the battle is over, the awful responsibility is gone; and therefore the countenance of such an one imparts a feeling of peace to the beholder.

Letitia always read prayers to him morning and night; and as she knelt before him while the book rested on his knees, he always

joined his thin hands together, and his lips moved, although no sound was heard; he had been speechless for many months.

A letter arrived from Nesta that morning, and although the sight of that loved handwriting made her heart bound with delight, yet the contents did not tend to raise her spirits, but rather the reverse; for Nesta's letter now was full of details concerning Roland, and its tone was not persuasive exactly, but painfully inquiring. She expressed her own anxiety to have Letitia with her again—described the marble ball-room with its *pietra dura* ornaments and marqueterie floor, the wild scenery of the glen, the Shievedhue mountains, the fine old woods of Kiloran, and said that all these were chiefly pleasant to her in thinking that some day she should be able to show them to Letitia. In fact, it was a letter calculated to touch Letitia in her most sensitive point—her affection for Roland's mother.

And the poor girl wept, for it seemed to be so hard to dash the hopes of that dear friend to the ground. Yet, what could she do? For it was only yesterday she felt convinced that Edwin loved her. Must she

crush all that enchanting feeling of perfect bliss which she felt convinced he experienced as much as she did herself!

As she was revolving these painful perplexities in her mind, she mechanically took up the morning paper, which had been brought in with the letters, and her eyes were arrested by seeing her own name in it. The paragraph ran as follows:

“A marriage is arranged to take place shortly between the beautiful and accomplished Lady Letitia Glenmaurice and the Viscount Blandon, of Blandon Park, in Cumberland. The fortunate peer came into possession of eighty thousand a year on attaining his majority.”

“What could this mean? Who can have spread such a report?” she thought, feeling quite paralysed with apprehension. “What can I do? That insolent footman is sure not to obey my orders. I saw he intended to let him in.”

She had promised to go to Signor Collini that day, and clung to the hope that he might in some way assist her; or, perhaps——But no, she felt sure Edwin would not be there during the sitting. She was sure that he would feel it would not be

right to take advantage of having overheard the appointment. He had made up his mind at the time that he would not—but now——She had heard Nesta speak of his mother—the Eva of her childhood—in the highest terms. Should she write a note and ask her to come? But the servants—there was no one except the page in whom she had any confidence. Her mother's temper had become of late years so bad that no servant remained long; the house had a bad name, and only the worst style of servants applied for places there. Moreover, the manner in which Lady Glenmaurice treated her daughter and her poor husband did not tend to impress the servants with any respect for either. Letitia's own maid was always going out, and whenever she remonstrated, she saw that the woman could not bear to be spoken to. She had ordered the carriage at two o'clock, to go to Signor Collini's, and after luncheon the insolent-looking Thomas came to tell her that it was at the door.

* * * * *

CHAPTER X.

It is easier to counsel than suffering to endure.

I also have known this, but a certain love carries me away.

Time will soften the evil, but now it is in the vigour of youth in thee.

Time thou mightest say, if Time it be to die.

Dost thou expect to benefit her who is dead?

Her wheresoever she is, it behoves me to honour.

EURIPIDES.

THE same paragraph which caused so much perplexity to Letitia had also been seen by the artist as he sipped his chocolate that morning: and it caused him no inconsiderable surprise, and indeed regret.

For he knew something of the profligate Lord Blandon—in fact, he happened to know more respecting him than most people, through the accident of having once painted the portrait of a young girl whose family were natives of his own town in

Italy, and to this young girl Lord Blandon had afterwards behaved in a manner cruelly revolting.

And now he was so angry that such a villain as Lord Blandon should prove to be the successful rival of the interesting young poet; so put out by the destruction of the little romance he had been building up in the union of those two persons, who from his natural insight into character he knew were so well suited to form each other's happiness, that he pushed away his breakfast in disgust, and sought refuge in his favourite art, hoping to restore his ideas to some kind of harmony.

But his equanimity was destined to be put to a still greater trial, for he had no sooner arranged his canvas and mounted his palette, than his servant opened the door and announced "Viscount Blandon."

"Oh, ah, this is the artist Lady Glenmaurice told me was painting her daughter," said the new comer, without seeming to notice the consternation depicted on the little artist's face. "I—I—want a picture of Lady Letitia Glenmaurice—I am going to marry—in fact, it's almost settled, though she is poor and I am very rich. Ha, ha,"

continued the self-satisfied peer, with the pleased conviction that he was doing a very condescending thing in telling the artist about his private concerns. "Where is the picture Lady Glenmaurice told me you were painting for her friend Lady Dumbleton? Ah, ah, I see—very like, very good. But I must have a full-length; I will pay any price, but I must have it soon."

The little artist longed to fling the palette at his head, but he restrained his anger sufficiently to answer with assumed composure:

"I cannot paint it soon; I have more orders—more than I can complete for the whole year."

"But if I pay double the price you generally ask?"

"If you were to pay four times double I could not do it."

"Very odd," he muttered to himself; "most things are to be had for money."

Signor Collini longed to say he was certain all the money in the world would not buy the affection of Lady Letitia Glenmaurice, if her parents should persist in forcing her to marry him.

"Ah, there is Lord Dumbleton and his

wife—very good : that is a beautiful picture. I should like one of me in the same position with my wife. But if you really cannot paint her portrait, I must try some one else. But perhaps you'll think better of it?"

But there was an expression on the little artist's face which convinced even his dull questioner that he was not likely to think better of it. So Lord Blandon glanced for a minute or two at the pictures round the room, and then, without taking any further notice of the artist, went away.

"Bah!" exclaimed Signor Collini, allowing his face to express some of the disgust which he had with difficulty repressed during the short conversation. "She had much better drown herself in the Serpentine reever than marry him."

Then he began to paint vigorously, as if he were endeavouring to forget his annoyance, and continued to do so for some hours.

At last it occurred to him it must be late, and yet Lady Letitia Glenmaurice had not arrived. He looked at his watch. It was half-past two; and she generally was so punctual, that the disagreeable surmise forced itself upon his mind that she might

have been prevented from fulfilling her appointment by Lord Blandon.

Three o'clock struck, still she did not appear; she sent no message, no note, and he began to feel really alarmed on her account.

Letitia was right in her conjecture that Edwin would not visit the studio at the hour she was expected. But he could not resist going there later in the day, at an hour when he felt sure she would have left Signor Collini's house. He felt it would be delightful even to look into the eyes that had rested upon her; to see the room and the objects on which her eyes had recently dwelt; to feel the atmosphere of beauty and enchantment her presence must have left there.

It was nearly five o'clock when Edwin reached the house, and found Collini just preparing to go out.

"She have never been here, and not sent no message, no explanation; and what about this dreadful report, that she is going to be married?"

"Married! to whom—to my cousin?"

"Ah! no—volesse Iddio. Yes, I wish it was your cousin if it could not be yourself. Ah, Dio, to one ver bad man. See here,

my paper." So saying, he pointed to the paragraph in the newspaper already quoted.

"It can't be—I will never believe it."

"But Lord Blandon come and he told me so himself; he came here this very morning to order her portrait. He pay anything; he give double for it if he could have it quick."

"He told you so himself? What did he say? Oh, what? Tell me all you know."

"Not much; he merely said what I have told you."

"And when did he come?"

"Between ten and eleven, and then I expect her at two."

"Will you not inquire at her house? Will you not endeavour to ascertain the reason of her not coming?"

"I go willing, and you—you will come with me?"

In his great anxiety to know the cause which had prevented her from fulfilling her engagement, Edwin could not refrain from consenting, so they walked to Grosvenor-square.

On the way, the little artist gave him an account of all he had heard of Lord Blandon, and it may be imagined that the

intelligence did not tend to diminish Edwin's cruel anxiety about her.

That Lord Blandon had had something to say to the non-fulfilment of her engagement with Signor Collini, was but too probable. Was it possible that she could have been engaged to him all this time, even when he first saw her at Lady Gordon's?

Yet his aunt evidently knew nothing of it that day when he discovered her wishes about her son, and when she divined his love for the same object.

Could Lady Glenmaurice have arrived, and was the fatal ceremony really on the point of being solemnised? These and a thousand such anxious questions tormented him all the way to Grosvenor-square, even while he was listening to Signor Collini's execrations of the "perfido milordo."

"What house is it?" he inquired, the moment they turned the corner of Charles-street and entered the square.

"There, you see that one on left. Number ——"

Edwin had not seen it before—at least, not with the knowledge that it contained the being who, for the last three weeks, had been the chief subject of his thoughts and

aspirations. What a different aspect the sombre, prosaic square, with its ugly, dingy, matter-of-fact-looking dwellings, now assumed! Yet it did not really appear to advantage, for most of the houses had their shutters shut, except those that had a scaffolding up and painters at work. They came up to the door, and Signor Collini gave a little knock, such as foreigners inexperienced in the London habit of knocking are supposed to give.

"That's not a gentleman's knock, nor yet a footman's," thought the lazy Thomas, who sat smoking a cigar in the hall below. "They may wait a bit, and do 'em good."

After an interval, the gentle knock again sounded—it denoted that the little man was impatient—so the footman reluctantly went up and opened the door.

"Is my Lady Letitia Glenmaurice at home?"

"No, sir."

"But she not come by appointment. What keep her away from my house?"

"Can't say; don't know nothin' about her ladyship's appointments," said Thomas, with a supercilious smile.

"But she gone out really, and not visible?"

"She's not at home," said Thomas, with an insolent emphasis on the words.

"Will you tell her Signor Collini called to inquire. I waited at home all the morning to finish her portrait."

"Very well, sir," said Thomas, who had been eyeing Edwin with an insolent curiosity from head to foot, to his great annoyance, for he felt sure the servant suspected that he was the person who was the most anxious for news about his lady. Thomas's sneering face made him feel positively guilty, and he longed to make himself invisible.

His embarrassment was not diminished by the servant suddenly asking, "And what other name, pray, shall I say?"

Edwin hesitated an instant, and replied, "Mr. Edwin O'Neil; but I am not come to call here myself."

The footman looked hard at him, with greater curiosity than before, for the name of O'Neil was well known among the servants at Glenmaurice Castle, and Thomas had heard much from those servants who went away the year before in disgrace.

"When do you expect my lady in?"

"Can't say."

"Well, I will write her one note, and

ask her when she will make time for sitting."

There was no further excuse for delay, although Edwin longed to penetrate into that dark hall and fathom the mystery, for it seemed so improbable that she had really gone out without sending a note or message to Signor Collini.

"I am ver sorry; I did see no way to hear more. But I see you are quite unhappy," said Collini, as they walked from the door. "Come home with me, and I will send a note, and we shall see if we can get any answer."

As this seemed to be the wisest plan, Edwin expressed his thanks, and returned home with the artist, who immediately wrote the note. He despatched his servant with it, desiring him to wait for an answer.

It was now nearly dark, and Signor Collini made Edwin share his little dinner, but of course he was too anxious and impatient to eat. At last the servant returned, saying there was no answer.

No answer! How often this reply has troubled us; how often have we written to inquire about all manner of things concerning which we are anxious, and then a

provoking servant returns with, "No answer."

"What can this mean?" said Signor Colini. "Was she not at home?"

"Don't know, sir; that was all the servant said, 'There is no answer.'"

"Vy did you not ask?"

"Did not know you wanted me to inquire, sir."

All this has happened over and over again to many of us, but never did it inflict a greater pang than on Edwin O'Neil. It seemed so utterly hopeless ever to hear about her, ever to discover what was destined to be her fate. There seemed to be no one who could tell him.

"If she not call to-morrow, I will send again and call again. Never fear, I will turn all topsy-turvy till I hear," said the energetic little artist, when he saw the look of deep care imprinted on Edwin's face. "You come to me at one o'clock to-morrow, and be sure I will find something out before that time."

Edwin did not feel at all hopeful, but he expressed his thanks, and walked home.

CHAPTER XI.

A foolish waste of words is this indeed
So to dread worthless and empty terrors.
But, oh! thoughtless ones, understand the real ills of mankind.
Our life is a struggle. And some indeed are prosperous
Quickly, but others hereafter, and others are so already among
mortals.

But Fortune wantons. For by the unhappy,
In order that he may be fortunate, she is honoured;
And by the happy, lest the prosperous gale should leave him,
She is praised up to the skies. Knowing these things, it behoves us,
When somewhat injured, not to bear it with anger,
Or injure others in such a manner as to hurt the state.

EURIPIDES.

EDWIN returned home in a state of the utmost suspense and perplexity to the little house in the dark street.

The sight of that insolent-looking footman—the shut-up house—the knowledge that Letitia was there alone, with no other protection than her poor helpless father—all he had heard of her worldly and ambitious mother—the profligate character of the worthless man she seemed to have chosen for her beautiful daughter—all recurred

most painfully to his mind as he walked towards his home.

It was in a dark street, for the rows of cheerless houses were high, and possessed that sad uniformity and that dingy hue, those narrow windows and absence of any attempt at ornament, which impart the depressing conviction that they were only intended for the dwellings of those whose dull business it is to get through life in the most prosaic and unlovely manner; places to eat, drink, and sleep in, perhaps make money in, but totally inadequate to afford any of those higher enjoyments which even this defective world is capable of giving, and which even in this most prosaic of centuries may still be produced by the tasteful employment of that money which is the great desideratum of most persons;—a street, in fact, of such unvarying ugliness is unrivalled in any other capital in the world.

The No. 16, where Henry and Eva had spent the last twenty-four years—more than half their lives—only differed from its neighbours by having boxes containing flowers fastened to all its windows. From some of these creeping plants were trailed up from one story to another, and some bird-

cages were nestling among the growing plants, and their songs and twitter produced a cheering sound. If they could have lived in the country, Eva would not have allowed her children to confine birds in cages; but they had few recreations, and she thought they ought to be allowed all the cheering sounds and sights which could be reasonably obtained, to counteract in their young minds the depressing effect of that ugly street, and dark, dull neighbourhood.

When Edwin gave his usual knock, which was well known by the inmates, his little sister Linda came bounding along the passage to open the door. He could hear the joyous pattering of her little feet, and her springing jump up to reach the handle of the door before it was opened.

To be loved by a child, to feel the eager, clinging pressure of little arms round one's neck, to know that one's expected presence makes that young heart beat with joy, must produce the refreshing conviction that we are of some use, that we are giving some solid pleasure; and this conviction should be consoling even in the midst of real sufferings.

"I have learnt all you told me, and so has

Henry and Evy, for mamma told us we must not give you any trouble to-day, because she knew that you were unhappy; and Norah has copied your manuscript so beautifully, I know you will be pleased with it, and she says they are the most beautiful verses you have ever written yet."

"Yes, that they are," said Norah herself, whose pretty beaming face peeped over the banisters at the top of the stairs.

Norah was the eldest of the young family. She was born when Edwin had attained his tenth year, and Norah was therefore a steady and respectable personage in the establishment, and had the management of several branches of the important household concerns confided to her care. And lately Edwin had allowed her to copy some of his MS. for the printer, and paid her twopence a page, which was the price he would otherwise have given to a professed copier, and which she devoted to the poor children at the parish school.

"And so you sat up later than usual to see me and tell me all this, you naughty child?" said Edwin, as he carried little Linda in his arms up-stairs to the drawing-room.

A pleasant sight was that little drawing-

room, particularly by night, when it did not depend for its brightness on the murky daylight. A bright wood-fire* burned on the brick hearth; it glanced on the glazed Dutch tiles which surrounded it, and illumined with its dancing flicker the painted ceiling and pictured-covered walls of the room.

Eva had painted the ceiling herself, and made a very fair copy of Guido's Aurora on it; and Nesta had given most of the pictures, which entirely covered the walls, so that scarcely any space was seen between them.

As Nesta was an unusually good amateur painter, and these were the most choice specimens of her art, they formed a never-ending source of pleasure to the children, and, indeed, to all who looked at them.

Two candles burned on the table where Henry had been reading near to Eva, whose busy fingers were occupied in making a dress for one of her children. She made many of their dresses as well as her own,

* Wood cut in blocks may be had in London, and if burned in a room where a uniformly large fire is not required to be kept up *all* day, it becomes less expensive than coal. It keeps in longer, and therefore requires less attention, and saving the furniture from being spoilt by the coal smoke, it thus becomes much more economical.

and their pretty attire was worthy of the graceful hand that so nimbly plied the needle. Since many friends of their family had given them various beautiful things, such as old china, a pietra dura cabinet, and carved furniture, there was nothing in that room to indicate that they were not rich. The colour of the velvet curtains, the gay hues of the carpet and chair-covers, were all, perhaps, rather brighter than Eva would have chosen had she not wished to counteract the dingy fogs, and cause her children to live as much as possible amid brightness as well as beauty.

For the same reason the walls of their schoolroom were covered with cheerful drawings and pictures, and even the attics and little nursery were adorned with engravings or prints.

Eva perceived that something had occurred to grieve her son; but she made no remark; she waited and watched to see if it would pass away. Edwin had a little attic at the back of the house, which looked out on the chimney-tops; but Eva had contrived to cover the walls entirely with tapestry, which she had procured bit by bit, and worked some herself to match. A

portière of the same covered the door, and the hangings of the little bed were made of old crimson brocade lined with white. An old carved table held his writing materials and the manuscript which Norah had copied, and his dressing things fitted into an old-fashioned sort of bureau, which shut up by day. An old Turkey carpet covered the floor, and the mellow hues of the whole combined to produce that harmony of colouring which helps to present pleasant and poetical ideas to the mind.

Before the children went to bed they had the enjoyment of hearing a little concert performed in such a brilliant manner, that many ladies of fashion who wished to make their parties attractive would have paid large sums to procure the like. Eva and Henry had both fine voices, which had received that kind of cultivation which, besides occasionally hearing good performances, can only be attained through the mental development of fine and holy thoughts; and the music they preferred belonged to the highest order of what may be called intellectual music. They did not, therefore, sing any of the common songs of the day; the music they chose was of a

much more happy-making character. The graceful duets of Mozart and Rossini, the fine compositions of Bellini and Donizetti, the solemnly grand music of Beethoven and Spohr—such were the strains on which the musical ears of their children were fed. Edwin took a part whenever he was present both vocal and instrumental, for he was rather a proficient on the violin, while his father played the violincello, and Eva either the piano or harp. They never practised, or even tried over anything for the first time, when the children were present, for the purpose of listening to the music. Eva's anxiety was to give them the full enjoyment of hearing the *best* music that could be procured without paying for it.

Her system was never to bring before their eyes or ears anything that was not perfectly harmonious; no angry word or look, no symptom of irritability or discontent, were ever shown before them if it were possible to avoid it. The servants—they only kept two besides the nurse—were never reprimanded before them. If there was any trouble or anxiety, the husband and wife never spoke of it before the children.

As far as the gloom of a home in the

heart of London could be counteracted by cheerful sounds, sights, words, and looks, these children were, indeed, brought up in an atmosphere of happiness. By Eva's judicious management, their meals were always well cooked. Their food was always of the best quality, and made to look nice on the table, which was decorated with as much taste as if they expected a duke to dine with them. Unless prevented by illness, she always found time to ornament and embellish the rooms with flowers. A flower, carefully cultivated and watered, was generally placed in a beautiful china vase on the centre table. With great care and thought it is astonishing how far money will go, even in buying furniture, dress, and various things, which we are, perhaps, apt to think cannot be attained without a large outlay. The material of Eva's dress often did not cost sixpence a yard, but it was made in such a way as to produce the mellow and graceful effect of the dress in an old picture.

On that particular day, when their little supper was finished, and the things put away, Eva followed her son up to his little tapestried chamber, and, sitting down in the

comfortable chair which he usually occupied when he wrote, she made him sit on the footstool at her feet. Then, stroking his curls with the soft touch of her loving hands, she endeavoured to soothe the troubled thoughts which she read too plainly on his broad forehead. "Now you must tell me," she said, "for you are in need of help and advice, I am certain."

The colour rushed quickly into his pale face, which as quickly grew paler than before. Eva twined her graceful fingers through his hair, and, bending over his throbbing brow, did not say anything, but listened. A few seconds more, and she had prevailed.

He told her all the hopes and fears he had experienced for the last three months—all he had heard in the cabin at Galteemore—his conversation about it with Aunt Mary—his meeting Letitia the day before at Signor Collini's studio—the anxiety he now suffered about her fate—the strange report of her intended marriage to Lord Blandon.

For some minutes after this disclosure Eva was lost in thought. At length she said, in a voice that betokened a strong endeavour to be calm :

"I never supposed this. I trust—I pray that it may turn out for your happiness."

"It is a horrible alternative," said Edwin—"a horrible choice of wishes for you—for there seems no hope for me except through the misery of your dearest and kindest friend, Lady Ardfinnan."

Eva shuddered, but said: "God disposes for the best. In the mean time, something must be done in this immediate matter. I will go to Grosvenor-square to-morrow. It is one of those cases when one is justified in intruding. If she is really Nesta's daughter (and I remember one or two circumstances noticed by Henry and myself which make me think it probable), we must interfere to prevent this sacrifice. In any case, I will endeavour to see and help her. I will go alone; you shall wait for me at Signor Collini's; he shall go with me to her door."

"But if she has already been taken away? Her mother may have sent for her to-day, and that man may have accompanied her into the country. She never would have sent back word there was no answer to Signor Collini's note."

"No, but the footman whose insolence you described may never have taken the

trouble to go up-stairs with it. They sometimes do such things. Her father may have been worse, perhaps ; with his state of health, at any moment his last hour might come."

"Then perhaps she may even now be alone in the house of death!" was the solemn thought which was impressed on mother and son.

CHAPTER XII.

For a tyrant to be religious is no easy matter.

SOPHOCLES.

As the day approached which was appointed for the celebration of the fêtes to be given in honour of Roland O'Neil's twenty-first birthday, the large house at Carrigroghan, as well as Dermot Castle, was filled with guests. Some foreigners of distinction, as well as the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, arrived, and Morgan was highly gratified at the compliments he received from these persons on the beauty of his residence, and the various improvements he had made. Certainly Dermot Castle deserved all the admiration that was lavished upon it, for such a dwelling belonging to a subject could rarely be seen. The gallery,

of one hundred and sixty feet long, contained a good collection of pictures. Not only was each picture good in itself, but the symmetry of the arrangement, the beautiful carved-work which surrounded each picture, presented a general effect from end to end of the long gallery which was most gratifying to the sight. Another room was devoted to water-colour paintings of English artists, and a few works of the pre-Raphaelite school. The conservatories at Carrigroghan furnished plants, which were placed on the battlements of Dermot Castle in boxes, and its staircases and corridors were filled with choice exotics. So that they all called it a fairy palace, and Nesta feared that a year's income must have been expended upon the fêtes.

There was to be a tournament and rural games in the park at Carrigroghan, and there some large stands had been erected with temporary seats all around. There were to be maypole dances and feastings in the villages: the rejoicings were to last for a week. In fact, it was all on a scale of more than royal splendour. Morgan's spirits were so high—he entered with such delight into all the preparations—that Nesta had

not the heart to urge the danger there seemed to her of such excessive outlay of money.

The banqueting-hall was to contain one hundred and fifty guests at two long tables, besides one table raised on the dais for the host and hostess and their most distinguished guests; and on the evening of the ball upwards of a thousand people were expected.

Lady Teviot had, as she said, come over that dreadful sea for the first time in her life, and ventured into that "unfortunate country where people were being always murdered," in order to be present at these fêtes. It was fortunately a fine autumn, and Ireland never appears to such advantage as in beautiful autumn weather.

To Nesta's great delight, Lord and Lady Dumbleton and their children arrived late in the afternoon of the second day before the birthday. Morgan was not at home to receive them, for he had been obliged to ride over to Kiloran to inspect the preparations for the grand dinner that was to be given to his tenants there. The afternoon was dark and cloudy, and it was becoming late as he returned home, so that he put his horse into a gallop when he came to a long

reach of turf by the side of the road that skirted the lonely bog of Kelikeely—the same bog through which Nesta had ventured with her boy-guide when she rode to Kiloran.

The sounds of violent lamentation suddenly burst upon his ears, and made his horse shy violently. He soon found it proceeded from a man who was squatted at the side of the road, near the low wall, holding his head in both his hands and bawling, while a raw-boned mare beside him was gazing vacantly into nothing.

“What is the matter?” shouted Morgan, in no friendly mood.

“Och! murther’s the matter,” said the man. “By the powers, as I was takin’ a stone out of the mare’s hoof, she up with her foot, and she hot me a pop, sir, on the side of the head.”

“I wish she had knocked your brains out,” muttered Morgan. “That noise you made was enough to frighten my horse into the bog. Here’s a shilling, and be off with you. Stay, how many miles am I now from Carrigtown?”

“Is it miles, yer lordship? Sure and I can tell ye as well as any chap in Tipperary.”

"Well, then, how many miles is it? Quick!"

"It's four miles it is, my lord."

"Four miles! Nonsense! It's nearer eight English miles; it must be."

"Well, maybe it's a taste over four, my lord; but 'tis the roads are so bad hereabouts we likes to give you good measure, and yer horse will go over it like the wind if ye want to go home to Dermot Castle that way; and an illigant pace the baste has, there's not his like in Tipperary, barring the black one yer lordship rode yesterday, and Master Roland's bay. Look at the ground he stands on. Och, he's a beauty. Maybe your lordship wouldn't lend me the loan of a suit of armour and let me ride him the day after to-morrow at the tournament. It's proud I'd be. I know all about it; I am a bit of a scholar, and could break a lance with the best of 'em."

"And who are you, pray?" said Lord Ardfinnan, who more than suspected the name of his strange petitioner, although he wished to feign ignorance.

"I'm your lordship's own son, Connor O'More," said the man, suddenly changing his tone; and, rising to his full height, dis-

played a fine, well-proportioned figure, and a countenance in which, even by the fast-darkening twilight, could be traced a strong resemblance to the man he confronted.

"My brother's son, I suppose you mean?" said Morgan, with a bitter smile.

"No, my lord ; the time for such trifling is past. I came here this day to see you alone ; to ask you as a mercy, to ask it as my right, to make a bit of a provision for me. It's half starved I am up there in the mountains. Nobody have I to look to ; there's nobody to take the orphant lad by the hand. The frown of Heaven will be on the father that deserts his own child, the son of her who loved ye, my lord, and would ha' done yer bidding—ay, and did do it—down to the gates of hell. It was her soul and body she lost for you, and the black despair turned the fair flower to ashes, as the lightning sears the forest tree. I come before you now this day. Let her soul rest in peace ; give me the bit and the sup in your own castle, or give me where-withal to live elsewhere ; own me as your son, and clear your brother, whom my mother wronged to do your bidding——"

"What next, thief," hissed Morgan be-

tween his teeth. "Get you gone; and if ever you cross my path again, I'll have you hunted down and shipped over the seas for a contraband whisky dealer."

With these words Morgan plunged the spurs into his horse's flanks, dashed away into the fast-deepening twilight, and was soon lost to sight.

"Och thin, be asy now, my lord. It isn't the bullet that would be long after following ye if ye were not my own father. There ye go, bristling all over with black lies like a hedgehog. Och, but wait a bit, and it's Connor O'More that's not done with ye yet; it's he that will drain the yellow gold out of ye, drop by drop, or he's not his own father's son! Sure and it's hungry ye are, ye poor baste," he continued, apostrophising the mare; "and it's mighty little pop ye've in yer poor old legs, though I made believe ye did, and set up that ullagone to get a hearing. But it's a younger horse than you that I'll ride at the tournay; and it's a suit of armour I'll beg, borrow, or steal, whether his lordship wills it or no. And now I'll go down to Thady Connor and write a letter. Thanks to Father Murphy I can do that; and if I'd minded him in a

few more things, maybe it's nearer heaven
I'd be now, ochone. God bless his rive-
rence, anyhow, Soggarth aroon !” So saying,
young Connor vaulted on the mare's back
and trotted down the road, singing to a wild
plaintive air :

Thaw ma cree queen bruitha le foeth.

My heart is sick and heavy with cold.

•

CHAPTER XIII.

Think well on this. Among mankind, indeed,
 Every one is liable to deceive themselves and err :
 But after he has erred, that man is not entirely
 Without sense and without happiness, who having inclined towards
 evil,

Repents nor continues unmoved.

Stubbornness truly incurs the charge of stupidity.

Being well disposed towards you, I speak well, and to be guided
 By good counsel, is pleasant, particularly if it brings advantage.

SOPHOCLES.

THE morning preceding the eventful day dawned with a cloudless sky. But Nesta awoke with a weight upon her mind, for she fancied the night before, when she was looking out of her window, that she saw the red hood and heard the low wailing sound on the opposite side of the mountain. She tried to think it was fancy ; and when she told Morgan of it he laughed at her fears. Again she endeavoured to remind him of the responsibilities of his important position—to persuade him to offer up a prayer on

this occasion for their son, for himself, for her. In vain. The party were first to go to the races, which were to be held in the park at Carrigroghan, and meet the guests who were lodged there. The Verdon's had filled their large house also. The Glenmaurices did not come over. Honoria wrote word that they were prevented by Lord Glenmaurice's illness. Lady Dumbleton and her daughter, Lady Di, drove with Nesta, Aunt Mary, and Lord Mowbray, to the races, and headed the procession of carriages, which passed through Carrigtown on their way to Carrigroghan. As they passed through the town cannons fired salutes, and loud cheers rent the air, while bands played, and all along the road triumphal arches were raised.

"All this must make you feel as if you were the queen," said Lady Dumbleton, as they heard the repeated cheers; "and your husband must feel as if he were king; and I suppose you have now a larger territory than almost any other subject in the three kingdoms."

As there was too large a party in the castle to be accommodated comfortably in the usual dining-room, they dined in the

banqueting-hall that evening. The band which was to perform at the ball played during dinner.

It was the first time Nesta had dined in that splendid hall, for she had been too ill to attend the fêtes given there to celebrate the christening of her son. Although this party was only a sort of rehearsal of the great banquet to be given on the following day, the hall was brilliantly lighted. Morgan had contrived to have lights placed on the outside of the old painted glass windows, so that the beauty of the colours and designs could be seen as well by night as by day, or rather they had the additional brightness of the gem-like colouring caused by artificial light.

Besides this brilliant light which streamed in from the "storied glass," large candelabra were placed against silver and golden dishes on brackets carved and gilt, in the spaces between the windows. At the end opposite the music-gallery a row of vases, some of them chefs-d'œuvre of Benvenuto Cellini, were lighted up by silver-gilt sconces, and below them was the carved buffet loaded with the old gold and silver plate of the De Lacys. The Duke of

Dalton, Lady Dumbleton's brother, sat by Nesta at one end of the table on the raised dais, while the young and beautiful Duchess he had lately married sat by Morgan at the other end. Lord Mowbray, who had handed in Lady Dumbleton, sat the other side of Nesta, and Roland and the pretty Lady Di, who was grown up to be the very image of her mother when Lord Dumbleton proposed to his "Cousin Di," were near on the other side. Aunt Mary and Mr. Praid were also within talking range, a little farther along the table. So Nesta had pleasant neighbours. She thoroughly enjoyed the whole scene, and yielded herself to the admiration which seemed to be offered by their guests to the husband whom she loved so well. She could discern also Morgan's countenance at the farther end, apparently beaming with happiness. But there is something in an excess of prosperity, in an excess of brightness, that sometimes makes us tremble.

Towards the end of dinner, when the servants had retired, and there was a pause in the music of the band, Nesta heard a sound which made her turn pale—a low, plaintive wail.

No one seemed to have heard it but herself. She tried to catch Aunt Mary's eye, but the latter was talking to Mr. Praid, and did not look at her.

Again it sounded as if nearer than before—as if within the hall—there, at the farther end—under the music-gallery !

Could Morgan hear it? The sound must be quite as distinct at that end of the table, but Morgan was talking so energetically to the young Duchess, that he apparently could hear nothing but his own voice.

Lord Mowbray saw that something had occurred to disturb Nesta, for he looked at her anxiously, and paused in the middle of his conversation with his next neighbour.

Again the plaintive wail reached her ear, and she saw that Lord Mowbray heard it also, and looked round ; for now it seemed to come still nearer, and then she fancied that a tall figure with a red hood passed out at a door in the corner under the gallery. Lord Mowbray had seen it too, and he said to Nesta in a low tone :

“ Was it that strange wailing sound that made you look so pale ? ”

“ Yes ; so you heard it, then ? And did you see anything in that corner ? ”

"Only one of the musicians going out," he said, anxious to turn away the impression, for he now remembered what Aunt Mary had told him about the strange figure which had appeared when Nesta's child died.

"That was not one of the musicians," said Nesta, shuddering. "Oh, how I wish Morgan would believe it!—that he would have the place searched—for I am certain now some misfortune will happen."

"If he does not, I will search everywhere myself. I will ask all the servants after dinner," said Lord Mowbray.

"No, never mind; it would be useless, it could not be—only tell him when we have left the room that the figure in a red hood passed out under the gallery. Do tell him this as soon as you can get near him without awakening too much attention; and do not mention it so as to let any one laugh at it, for I think that there is something very solemn in this appearance—something very awful in these sounds. It may be a warning; it may come to—to—remind us of what we are perhaps too much inclined to forget."

"Then you think it may be that banshee

which seems to be attached to some Irish families?"

"Perhaps; if it is not something much more. I can't explain now, for we ought to go to the drawing-room." And Nesta rose to signal for the ladies to retire.

She mentioned this occurrence to no one else, and endeavoured to tranquillise her fears as much as possible. But she was anxious for the arrival of the gentlemen, and as soon as she saw Lord Mowbray, she questioned him as to whether he had been able to tell Morgan what he had seen and heard.

"Yes, and he says he heard it too; but he laughed at my imagining there was anything strange in it."

"And did he see the figure?"

"No; but he said what I did, that it was most probably one of the musicians. And I inquired of all the serving people, but no one had seen any one pass out with a red cloak and hood. But Morgan and I have told them to look well through the castle, and have it carefully secured at night."

Before Nesta returned to rest that night, she endeavoured to ascertain from her husband whether he had seen or heard any-

thing of the mysterious figure. But he only laughed rather more gaily than usual, and told her not to worry herself with foolish fears.

"Yet Lord Mowbray saw and heard it also," she said. "Surely it may be the spirit of some ancestor that watches over the fate of her descendants. It may come to warn us of evil, to make us remember; and if you would pray with me, one petition for the son you so wished to have—perhaps some misfortune may be averted. Oh, Morgan, if you would but believe—oh, if you would pray for a blessing on that son; think that if prepared—if in a fit state, we each expect to meet again in a better world."

"That better world never can be mine," he said, with some of his old bitterness.

"Oh, do not say so! It might, it *must*—oh, hear me. Do not look away—do not despise my efforts. To-morrow is a solemn day: let not our son enter upon it without a father's prayer!"

"Nonsense; go to sleep; be fresh for to-morrow, and do not indulge these foolish fears and fancies."

He would not pray.

Then Nesta went to her son's room. He was already sleeping the calm sleep of youth. His mother knelt down and prayed long and fervently for her son, and for the husband who would not pray for himself. Then she became more calm, and went to rest.

CHAPTER XIV.

Speak nothing presumptuous; seest thou not in what evils thou
art?

SOPHOCLES,

WHEN Nesta awoke on the morning of the birthday, she could not divest herself of the impression which the mysterious figure had left on her mind the night before. She dreaded that some misfortune would happen to either Morgan or her son, and she determined, if possible, not to lose sight of them.

Throwing on a loose dressing-gown, she first went to her husband's study, where he always went as soon as he arose in the morning, to look over his papers and letters before breakfast.

She found him engaged in reading a letter which had arrived by a messenger late the night before. She thought he did not seem to like being interrupted, so she sat down with

a book until he should have finished reading them, for she wanted to say a few words more to urge him, on this important day, to think of his son's future happiness, and turn his thoughts to that eternity which he was always inclined to forget. She was revolving in her mind how to word her request in the manner best calculated to arrest his attention and touch his heart, when she was startled by an exclamation of wrath from him, and, on looking up, she saw an expression of mingled rage and fear on his countenance caused by something he was reading. As he read on, it changed to an expression of proud defiance and determination.

"Never! never! never!" he muttered between his set teeth. And, turning suddenly round to the fireplace, he crushed the letter in his hand, threw it into the flames, and watched it until it was entirely consumed. "Ha! are you there?" he said, as if he had only then perceived her.

"Why are you not dressing? Remember, you have to do the honours of this day."

"Yes, I remember it well. That is why I came here to implore you to ask the blessing of God this day on our son."

“Pah, don’t be so silly. What is there in a day? Are not all days alike? Why does he require blessing more to-day?”

“Why is it then celebrated? Why——”

“If this is all you have to say, you had better postpone it, for I have many letters to answer before breakfast.” And, turning angrily away, he sat down to write.

She stood behind him with her hands clasped; she did not speak again; but ah! that he could have looked round—that he had looked into those touching eyes—that countenance, more beautiful far than ever in its matured development, telling of a whole world of lovely thoughts—that graceful figure leaning forward in mute entreaty—the resigned expression of those quivering lips—the attitude indicating prayer to God, and silent, hopeless, clinging anxiety to avert evil—the evil of eternal misery from the man she still loved so deeply!

Had he looked round, he might have been touched; but, though he was conscious of her presence—though he must almost have heard the anxious beating of her heart, the convulsive clasping of her straining hands—he would not be softened. His broad shoulders were squared in reso-

lute insensibility; his fine head, formed by Nature to be the shrine of all the intellectual and moral qualities which ought to counsel well—which ought to be susceptible of beauty and goodness; those dark clustering curls, still showing in their glossy brightness the full vigour of health; the small ear, beautiful in its marble whiteness—all this her eyes rested on with admiring sadness, for she read in each separate feature and lineament the same relentless disregard to her entreaty.

She tried to move away; she tried not to disturb him any more. Then, as if she could endure it no longer—as if she could no longer resist the impulse which impelled her—she placed her hands on his head, and, stooping down, kissed the glossy curls, and murmured a low “God bless you!”

“Oh, forgive me!” she exclaimed, as he turned fiercely round. “I am going directly; but do not—oh, do not—part from me in anger! Say you forgive my intrusion! Oh, look once—only once more—look at me with those loving eyes you sometimes have, and then I will be happy! There! that smile, that kiss, makes me hope! And now I will go and greet Roland on his birthday.”

CHAPTER XV.

Time, the long, the countless, brings forth all unseen things,
 And also again conceals those which it disclosed.
 And there is nothing hopeless, except the awful oath
 And the stubborn spirit, which both are caught up by Time as its
 prize.

* * * * *
 For having done many honourable things,
 I have resolved on this conduct towards the Greeks,
 Ever to be a chastiser of the bad,
 Therefore it is not possible for me to be faint-hearted in toils.

SOPHOCLES.

How had this mysterious letter been brought that Morgan had in anger destroyed? By the simplest of means: by a messenger. About nine o'clock the evening before, a tall, powerful young peasant rode into the stable-yard of the castle, dismounted, and delivered the letter, saying that he would wait for an answer. He did wait a minute or two, standing first on one leg and then on the other; then, suddenly tossing back his head, he said to one of the grooms:

"Maybe ye'll know Mick O'Reilly?"

"Him that's a cousin of Pat Murphy, by Kiloran, and comes from Ballymahoolan, on the other side of the black mountain?" answered the groom.

"Sure, then, it's himself I want, and divil another. It's here he lives, I'm thinking."

"It's me that ought to know that same Mick O'Reilly. Wasn't it me and Tim Connelly and young Haggarty up at——"

"Whisht, now, for it's late I am; and I'll thank ye for the loan of your good manners if ye'll tell me whether he serves the O'Nale—I mane his lordship."

"Indeed, then, he does; and, by the same token, he's about the stables now."

The groom disappeared, and presently returned with Mick O'Reilly. The stranger looked at the two with an expression which said as plainly as looks could speak that the two were one too many. He again rested on alternate legs, scratched his head in that unmistakable way that indicates "bother" in an Irish peasant, and finally exclaimed in an audible tone, as he dragged Mick away by the arm:

"It's a message, Mick, I've got for ye from yer ould mother, and maybe you'd rather I'd tell it ye alone."

Mick stared, and replied: "Why (rest her sowl!) she's——"

"Howld yer tongue, and bad cess to ye, making me a liar before that spalpeen yonder!" interrupted the stranger, in a whisper. "How else could I get ye away from him to spake a quiet word or two wid ye, Mick O'Reilly?"

Mick nodded, and they walked away to a retired part of the stable-yard. The stranger then faced about, and, placing himself where he could command a view of the yard, so as not to be taken unawares, said, without further preamble:

"Mick O'Reilly, it's myself that'll have one of them iron dresses, and a horse too, out of the O'Nale's stables for to-morrow's show."

"It's joking ye are," answered Mick, as soon as he could recover from his astonishment at this extraordinary proposition.

"It's not, Mick; and I mane to do it," said the stranger, whom the reader will have recognised as Connor O'More.

"It can't be done at all, I tell you," said Mick.

"It's yourself that shall do it, I tell you," said Connor.

"Divil take me if I do anything of the sort at all," said Mick, turning away, with the evident intention of making a retreat.

Connor seized him by the arm with a herculean grasp, and a look that boded ill to resistance.

"Let me alone, thin," said Mick, rubbing his arm. "It's transported to Botany Bay I'd be if I did what ye want. Have ye no heart, that ye'd get a poor boy into trouble, and he-ye-er own kith and kin, too?"

Connor appeared softened by this appeal. Kith and kin are words of kindly import to an Irish peasant at all times, except at the period of a faction fight.

"Sure and not a hair of yer head shall be touched for anything ye do for me, Mick O'Reilly. I can howld that over the O'Nale's head that'll bend him to my will." And Connor stooped down, and whispered in Mick's ear earnestly. Mick opened his eyes very wide, and took in the meaning of the whispered words gradually, after they had been all spoken.

"Are you to be trusted then, Mick?" asked Connor suddenly, after a long silence. "Remember, not a word of all this, unless I tell ye that ye *may* spake."

"Is it to be trusted I am? Sure then I'll no more spake about it, unless I'm towld to spake, than if I was a dead man entirely. But I can't think, now, what it is yer after with this set out to-morrow. What'll ye be up to on horseback, and dressed out for all the world like Brian Boru?"

"Because it's a right I have to be there," replied Connor, with flashing eyes, and drawing himself up to his full height, while every gesture and feature recalled vividly Lord Ardfinnan to the mind of his companion. "Because it's a good right I have to be there, if there was any justice in this counthry at all; as good a right as that dark-faced spalpeen of a Roland, and a better too——"

"Sure it's the O'Neil hisself," muttered Mick. Then he added aloud, "But I wouldn't try it now, for all that. Sure it's kicked off the horse ye'll be, or yer bones broken to smithereens by them great pikes——"

"Be quiet now. I'll ride the baste well enough, if he's got any mouth at all. Haven't I ridden——"

"Oh, bother the riding! Ye'll do your indivour, and maybe ye'll give them a

bating afther all. Still, I'm thinking it's a pity to do it."

"I want to give *him* one more chance—the last chance," answered Connor, in a low voice; "and I want to show him he's no call to be ashamed of me, his son."

"And have ye asked Father Murphy about it now?"

"Indeed and I've not. It's angry he was the last time I clapped eyes on his riverence. He towld me I was grown to be a bad lot entirely, and I'd come to no good along with them chaps up there yonder."

"Indeed and it's thrue for you there, every word; and it's well ye'd be doing for yourself, Connor O'More, if you'd attind to his riverence."

"Bother you, Mick! Say no more about it, now. Be quick and do as I tell ye, or by jabers——"

"Oh! thin, it's unasy in yer mind ye are. Go and talk to his riverence, and ask him to advise ye."

"Divil take ye, Mick O'Reilly. What advice should his riverence give me now, when he towld me all about it the very last time I saw him? and by the same token, it was the day I went to Carrigtown to see

Terence McCormick about the ould bay mare. He towld me it wasn't myself that should have anything to do with the business at all at all. And he says to me, says his riverence, 'Connor O'More, it's grieved I am at all this, and puzzled intirely what to belave. If it's thrue, it's downright awful; but I can't quite think it is, for many's the lie you've towld me afore now; so I can't belave ye—at least as far as Mike Hennessy's death is consarned. The other story, about the Will, maybe isn't altogether the revarse of the thruth. But I tell ye, Connor, do you lave it now to them that knows it, as ye tell me there are them that do, and let them spake to the magistrates; and if it's so as ye say, the law will sarch it out and bring it to the light of day. But I tell ye plainly, I don't belave what them chaps up there say, for it's a bad lot they are, and you're little better yerself now, Connor O'More; and a bitter sorrow it's been to me, when I tried to make a dacint boy of ye, and taught ye Latin and ciphers, and instructed ye in yer duty.' 'Och! thin, yer riverence,' says I, 'it's sore-hearted I am to think how little I've profited by yer riverence's kindness.' 'What's the good of

being sorry, Connor O'More,' says he, 'if ye don't mend yer ways for it?' 'Sure then, yer riverence,' says I, 'it's maning to mend I am.' 'Commence then by not thritening yer own father,' says he. 'It isn't thritening, saving yer riverence,' says I. 'It is,' says he. 'Sure and yer riverence knows best,' says I. 'And it's repinting I am of the life I've been leading up there beyand the fairies' glen.' 'Commence now, I tell ye, Connor,' says he, 'and don't decave yerself by saying ye'll repint some day or other.' 'Oh! thin, yer riverence,' says I, 'it's at once I mane.' 'When?' says he. 'I've got some little business to settle for Terence McCormick,' says I. 'Your riverence wouldn't like me to niglict a promise, and him down with the masles, too.' 'It's lying ye are, I tell ye,' says he. 'No, by jabers,' says I. 'Don't swear,' says he. 'Sure and I wouldn't be so bowld as to go agin yer riverence,' says I. 'Wasn't it my ould grandmother (rest her sowl!) that taught me afore I could spake to ask yer riverence for a blessing, and to honour ye? and didn't ye instrucht the poor orphant? (Bad luck to me for a graceless spalpeen that made ye a bad return for it all!) Didn't yer riverence

tache me——?’ ‘Oh! bother,’ says he. ‘You’re for all the world like yer ould grandmother (rest her sowl!), palavering, blarneying, and stringing together a power o’ words, and all the while the truth ye’ll be telling is on the other side of nothing at all. Now listen, Connor O’More. I tell ye it’s not for any man to threaten, or accuse, or dishonour in any way his own father.’ ‘Is it threatening?’ says I. ‘Sure, thin, and it’s asking him not to be threatened—just as yer riverence says intirely.’ So I up and I rode off on the ould mare, for it’s every bit of eight-and-twenty miles I had to go that blessed day. Now, Mick, don’t ye go and tell me to ask Father Murphy about it any more; just as if I’d contradict his riverence! Sure an it’s his bidding I’m doing intirely—bad luck to yer manners!”

“Och! thin, it’s thrue what yer saying,” said Mick, slowly scratching the side of his head, for he had been bewildered into conviction by this truly Hibernian train of reasoning. “But are ye sure now that his riverence did thruly mane the same as you mane?”

“Is it a born fool I am?” said Connor.

“There’s one of them iron coats, and that with a great pike and all complete, and no

one to wear it," observed Mick, after a pause. "There's one of them gentlemen couldn't come, and that's why it's to be had. I wouldn't say exactly that I mightn't be able to get it for ye. And for the matter of a horse, why——Well, I'll do my indivour, Connor O'More. Maybe there'll be the horse and the rigimintals that was mint for him that can't come——"

"It's early I'll be to-morrow morning, Mick," whispered Connor, seeing a groom approach. "It's early I'll be—maybe four o'clock—afore them chaps are woke. Mind, now, I mane to have the things—horse and all. But perhaps I'll ride the ould mare, if ye'll put the things upon her."

"I'll do my indivour," reiterated Mick. "I'll do my indivour; and it's in throuble I'll get for it, too—bad luck to ye!"

The groom who had carried the letter into the castle now came up to where they were standing, and said :

"My lord is with the company just now; and it's late it will be afore his lordship will send out an answer, I'm thinking."

Connor threw back his head by way of response, and mounted the old mare, saying it would do as well the next morning. The groom thought so too, though how the

answer was to be conveyed, and where, did not appear.

Mick walked by the mare a little distance out of the stable-yard; but Connor was taciturn, and did not give him any encouragement to remain in his society. Presently, at a turn in the road, Connor pulled up, and said :

“ Good night to ye then, Mick. At four o’clock to-morrow morning, long afore the sun’s up, I’ll be here on the ould mare, and maybe I’ll ride her. But it’s the iron coat and the pike I’ll have, or it will be worse for ye—mind that now, Mick O’Reilly.”

“ And are ye sure, thin, that his riverence did thruly mane the same as ye mane?” roared Mick, as Connor rode away.

“ Whisht, thin, with yer hullabuloo,” replied Connor, pulling up. “ It’s a born idiot ye are. Didn’t I say to his riverence, says I, when he towld me it was a sin for a man to threaten his own father, says I, ‘ It’s asking him not to be threatened I am, just as yer riverence says intirely.’ ”

He cut short any further question by setting off at a gallop. Mick returned to the stables fairly bewildered into the belief that Father Murphy approved of what Connor was about to do.

CHAPTER XVI.

Never again, my friends, could I wonder at a man
Who, being nothing by birth, consequently errs,
When those who deem themselves to have been nobly born,
Err in their speech with such words as these.

SOPHOCLES.

WE left Nesta, after her fruitless interview with Morgan, on her way to greet Roland on that his birthday.

He was still asleep when she entered his room. She stood by his bedside, and seemed to hesitate.

"Shall I wake him?" she thought, "or should I do harm by doing so, as I fear has been the case with his father just now? They are terribly alike, and so much depends on choosing the right moment."

The mother knelt by her son's bedside, and prayed long and fervently. She prayed that his heart might be touched and awakened to a sense of his responsibilities—the awful responsibilities he would one day

inherit with his vast possessions, when thousands of his fellow-creatures would be committed to his care, for whose well-being he would be answerable. She prayed that this day might begin for him a new life. Alas! how often do our own evil passions make the prayers of those who love us to be of no avail!

After breakfast the whole party from the castle were to go to Carrigroghan Park for the rustic games and tournament, there to be joined by the guests who were lodged at that house. Morgan and a few of his guests were to take a part in the tournament. Temporary stands and galleries, covered with red cloth or velvet, were reserved for the ladies and spectators. The centre gallery, which was destined for Nesta and her more intimate friends, was lined with crimson velvet hangings fringed with gold, and velvet chairs and footstools were placed in it, the two centre ones raised above the rest for Nesta and Lady Diana Mortimer, who were to distribute the prizes. Behind these galleries were temporary rooms fitted up with crimson carpets and festoons of flowers, where refreshments were served during the whole day.

After Lady Ardfinnan and her guests had taken their places, they were able to survey the magic scene. The broad expanse of park, with its fine trees, lay before them, bounded by one side of the beech wood, which extended nearly up to the broad terrace-walk before the house. The house itself was not visible, as it lay behind the gallery in which they were seated, the lists being placed in front of the house, where the races had been held the day before. In a large low tent to the left, from which waved a banner with the O'Neil arms, the knights who were to fight in the tourney were waiting, with their horses caparisoned in the rear. Two mounted halberdiers stood on each side of the open space where the knights were to enter. They had not been seated more than a minute, when a man on a white horse was seen coming across the park. He was dressed from head to foot in chain armour; his face was visible, for his visor was up.

"Who is that very handsome man on the white horse?" inquired Lady Dumbleton of Nesta; "see, he's coming now into the lists, and looking round as if he wanted some one. What a splendid figure! I am sure

he must be a descendant of some of the old Kings of Ireland—Brian Boru, or some such name."

"Where? Oh, I see, yes—I—I have seen him before," said Nesta, turning very pale.

"What is the matter?" asked Lady Dumbleton. "Why are you so agitated?"

"I hardly know," faltered Nesta. "It is very foolish of me; it is only because he comes in such a mysterious manner. I have not been well."

"Why, that is the man we saw on the top of the rock the other day, near Eyrie Lodge," said Lord Mowbray.

They all saw with surprise that it was the very same.

"How wonderfully like Lord Ardfinnan," whispered Lady Dumbleton to Aunt Mary, as the rider approached nearer, and looked with a kind of kingly haughtiness and curiosity into the gallery. "I suppose that is why poor dear Nesta looked so agitated. Some mystery, eh? And see, now, he has ridden off to the tent, and there Lord Ardfinnan has come out, and the man is talking to him; he seems trying to persuade him about something; and look how angry Lord

Ardfinnan seems ; see with what a scornful gesture he orders him off. I suppose that magnificent young man will ride in the tournament, and if his dexterity is equal to the high breeding his features denote he will be sure to win, and poor Nesta will have to give him her bracelet with her own hands."

Some such idea passed through Nesta's mind too. But her face was quickly averted, and she appeared to be talking rapidly to Lord Mowbray, who was near. The other galleries were now becoming rather crowded, and as there seemed to be scarcely any more room in them, some new comers who had just arrived looked longingly at the centre one, and a few of the more enterprising appeared at the door, and asked if they might be admitted, as all the places were taken in the other stands.

While Nesta was talking in a low tone, her ear caught the sound of a shrill Irish voice, which she recognised as that of her old friend Mrs. O'Malley.

"I'm sure, then, it's her ladyship will let me and me daughters in. Sure 'tis crushed I am entirely, and me bran new mantle, and 'tis from Paris I sent for it on purpose to wear on this blessed day."

Nesta immediately rose to greet her, and

to shield the warm-hearted old lady from the scornful looks of Lady Teviot and others, some of whom were owners of property in Ireland, yet, like too many Irish proprietors, despised everything in that country except the rents.

"Ah, then, it's a darlin' ye are, and I always said so, and sure wouldn't I walk barefoot to do ye honour, and it's wishing ye joy I am with all the veins of my heart," said Mrs. O'Malley, at the very top of her voice.

"A good specimen of native produce; I advise you to preserve it for the next cattle show," said Lady Teviot, as Nesta passed near on her way to the front seat, after having deposited Mrs. O'Malley and her daughters in a good place.

"She was my mother's friend," said Nesta, with a calm dignity, which acted as a silent rebuke to the proud lady.

"Your mother's friend," said Mr. Praid, "and, as I can perceive, a good, honest-hearted soul, just the person I should like to know; will you introduce me to her? I'll try to amuse her, and I am sure she will do me good."

"That I will; but look, there they come," she said, as at the sound of trumpets

from the terrace four knights, richly caparisoned, left the tent and rode into the lists, preceded and followed by men-at-arms. "Morgan is not one of these, I see; he has steel armour damascened with gold and a griffin couchant on his helmet, the device of my family," said Nesta, "and he has a black horse. But see, there is the man in chain armour who was here just now, the second on that side, on the white horse."

"That is a fine animal, and the man looks determined to win," said Lady Dumbleton. "What a beautiful sight it is! One might quite fancy one was transported back to the middle ages."

No one spoke again for some minutes: they were absorbed in the spectacle before them. Presently a shout of approbation was heard, as the stranger on the white horse, having overthrown his antagonist, was declared victor. He jumped lightly to the ground, and two heralds led him to the place where Nesta was seated, to receive from her the bracelet. The young man ascended the few steps that led up from the arena to the foot of her seat, and, kneeling on one knee, looked at her attentively with an expression of reverential admiration,

which formed a great contrast to the haughty and defiant manner in which he regarded the others. As she gave him the prize, he bent forward and whispered, too low to reach any ear but her own :

“If the chief of the O’Neils will follow the counsel contained in the letter that reached the Black Tower of Dermot last night, all will be well ; but if not, there waits for him a fatal—an awful end. Let him beware. May the light of your sweet eyes melt his hard heart, and make him consent to do justice to the injured this day ere the sun goes down. After that, it will be too late.” Then, with a low bow, the speaker retreated.

“The letter he received last night,” thought Nesta ; and the fears caused by the appearance of the banshee returned in full force. “It must have been that letter which caused such anger this morning—the one he threw in the fire ! Oh, how my heart misgave me when I saw his hard, defiant, obstinate expression ! And now, how can I see him ? It will be impossible before sunset.”

At last she resolved to call Lord Mowbray, and make him try to persuade Morgan

to come and speak to her. He saw it was of importance, and hastened to find him. But it was not easy; other jousts were beginning; and when at last he did so, Morgan would not listen.

"Tell her that it is impossible," said he; "I cannot come now; she may send me a message if she wants anything."

"I think she is ill."

"Then send for the doctor. It is only a little fatigue; she will be sure to be all right by-and-by."

Roland was to take part in the next, and the visors of the combatants were down, so that they could only be distinguished by the coats of arms on their shields. One very tall man, with a purple surcoat over his armour, took his place opposite Roland, and, although his dress was different, Nesta felt sure that it was the same man who had won the last.

The prize for the victors in this joust was to be given by Lady Dumbleton's pretty daughter, Lady Diana Mortimer. As the Queen of Beauty, she was placed on a chair of state.

Mr. Praid, whose eyes were as sharply discriminating as ever, remarked that Lady

Di had unconsciously evinced greater interest in Roland than in any other of the combatants that day; that her young heart, or her lively imagination, seemed to be half captivated by him; "and," thought he, "if Lady Letitia is unable to make up her mind to have him and gratify the anxious wishes of his mother, the boy cannot do better. Little Lady Di will love him for himself, I know: she is an honest, good-hearted little creature. All this fine place and property will weigh as little in the scale as Dumbleton Castle did in the eyes of her dear little simple-minded mother. Lady Dumbleton and her husband would both be as happy on five hundred a year in a farm-house. Everything comes to those who least wish for it. All is in the wrong place, or, at least, what *would* be the wrong place, were it not that those who value riches least did not make a much better use of them than those who sacrifice everything for their attainment."

Some such moralising as this passed through Mr. Praid's head: meanwhile, he was listening with a peculiarly civil face and benignant smile to Mrs. O'Malley's energetic prattle.

"Now tell me, sirr—for ye seem as kind and civil-spoken a gentleman as ever I laid eyes on—who that tall handsome gentleman was that won the first turn?"

"That is just what I want to know myself. No one seems to know, or to be able to learn. He does not appear to be acquainted with anybody, and yet I never saw a more high-bred looking man, but it is more the high breeding of a lofty savage. I do not think he is exactly what we should call a gentleman, in the ordinary sense of the word; he appears to me to be something like a Red Indian; or no, rather a Spanish matador—one of the vigorous and well-made fellows that one sees at bull-fights. I saw one very like him at Seville. Yes, he's a complete Spaniard: those black eyes, with their hidden fire; the graceful indolence of his attitude, when not actually in movement. There's a great deal of Spanish blood in Ireland, by-the-by; particularly in the west."

"Yet her ladyship (God bless her loving face!) seems to know him, and I remarked that he spoke to her as if they'd met before, though I couldn't hear what was said. And——But look! is not that man in the

purple surcoat very like him in size and height? And see, he's just opposite our young heir! I know that's our Mr. Roland, God bless him! in the silvered armour, because of the lilies on his shield. I am sorry now that stranger is turned against him."

"There is no danger, for their lances are blunted."

"Perhaps not; but I would like Mr. Roland to win. I'm sure that purty young lady on the throne there, with the golden hair and dove-like eyes, would much rather give the prize to him than to that proud-looking stranger."

"So I think, and I have great hopes he will, although the other knight is much taller; yet I would rather bet upon Roland, for he is more at home on his horse. I don't think that wild stranger has been much accustomed to riding. He won the last by sheer determination; he would have killed fifty horses to win it."

"Sure, then, it's he that's as much determined now, for look how he dashes along. Ah, then, isn't he kicking up dust enough to smother us all entirely! Sure I believe it's the very devil himself. He was within

a pip of bringing our boy off that time : the blow he gave him sounded like thunder. And oh, sirr, look at our darlin' lady ! See, she's as pale as a corpse, and all of a tremble for her son ! Oh, sir, and is it really safe, and he her only son !" And then the tears started to Mrs. O'Malley's eyes. " Who ever would have thought it's crying I'd be after, at this fine show, but I don't like to see our own darlin' lady frightened ! Oh, then, won't you try to stop it, sirr ! It's very bold of the stranger to go so fierce at him, and it's frightened she is, the mother of him. Oh, then, won't you try to stop it, sirr !"

But at that critical moment the horse of the unknown knight, which had been urged to greater exertion than his strength could endure, swerved and staggered. Roland, who had been shaken in his saddle by the lance of his antagonist, recovered his seat ; to spur his horse forward was the work of a moment ; the aim of his lance was true, the horse and his rider were taken at disadvantage, and both rolled on the ground.

The stranger seemed unable to rise ; Roland, who feared that he might have been stunned by the fall, hastily dis-

mounted, and endeavoured to raise him up. The men-at-arms and some other people came forward; he was lifted up, and his helmet raised. He appeared to suffer severely; he was scarcely able to stand, and his face was deadly pale.

"Sure he's kilt he is, entirely," said Mrs. O'Malley, who had remained watching in speechless anxiety during the latter part of the combat. "Och hone, the poor lad, it almost sarved him right for treating our heir so roughly. You see Roland has a bruise on his face; that is the strange knight's doing; but he's never minding it at all, and only thinking about his antagonist. See, he's helping him to leave the course."

Roland was declared victor, and as soon as he returned to the lists he was led in triumph to Lady Diana's throne.

"I am really not hurt at all," he whispered to his mother, as he passed near, "only a little bruised; but I am afraid my antagonist has received some internal injury."

"Ah, then, 'tis happy the young lady is," said Mrs. O'Malley. "Does it not do one's old heart good to see her purty face all over

blushes, her laughing eyes like two joyous stars a twinkling on a summer's night. Ah, I hope the pretty innocent will not be disappointed; and he looks as much pleased as she does."

During all this time, Morgan had not made his appearance in the gallery, and Nesta's anxiety to see and speak to him became painfully intense. The message Lord Mowbray had brought back to her did not tend to diminish her fears, and now she determined to ask Roland to find his father, and implore him to come and speak to her for a few minutes. She felt it would be impossible for her to leave the gallery without causing great surprise, but she could meet him in the refreshment-room behind, could he be persuaded to come there and speak to her.

"I will endeavour to find him," said Roland, in answer to her entreaty; "but I think he said he had been called away to speak to some one. I am afraid you are anxious about my bruise, or something; you don't look well, dearest mother. Pray cheer up, for this is a fine day, and all the people seem really enjoying themselves. Now there is to be the running match, and

that fine mountaineer ought to win it, or some of those Peep-o'-Day Boys from Galteemore. I hear they are about the finest race in all Ireland, and the most lawless——”

“Oh, do pray get your father to come,” interrupted Nesta, whose anxiety rendered her unable to enter into the spirit of the scene.

Roland was unable to find his father, and if Nesta could have seen who was speaking to her husband at that very time, she would have been convinced that no arguments of hers would be of any avail if he failed to be impressed then. Morgan was at that very moment rejecting the advice and resisting the eloquent appeals of that good old man, Father Murphy. These were his parting words:

“Won't you listen, then, to an infirm old man, who has walked many a weary mile this blessed mornin' to save you? Sure, then, and it's a visit of charity I'm after, for it's little else than scorn that I ever expected; but if ye'll be persuaded, it's thankful I'll be—though sure an it's neither myself nor this unfortunate country that will gain anything at all by it, but only you

yourself——” A distant flourish of trumpets furnished Morgan with an excuse for turning away. As he did so, he muttered between his teeth :

“Those cursed priests are always meddling. I wish they were all kicked out of the country.”

And at last the time came for the guests to return to Dermot Castle and Carrigroghan, to prepare for the great banquet that was to be followed by a ball. They drove home in open carriages through that lovely landscape, which was illumined by the pink radiance of declining day, while an opal light danced on the distant sea, and the rich tints of autumn clothed the woods.

As the sweet breath of the perfumed evening air fanned her cheek, Nesta thought sadly how beautiful this world would be but for the dark hidden crimes and sins which are the main causes of its sorrows and sufferings.

CHAPTER XVII.

I am lost, undone, I am utterly destroyed, oh my friends.

These things would never have been thus, unless by the will of Heaven.

SOPHOCLES.

It happened that Florentine was at this time attending on Aunt Mary, whose own maid was ill. At dressing-time on this eventful day she came into the room looking ill and terrified. Her hand shook so much that she could scarcely fasten the dress.

“What is the matter?” inquired Aunt Mary, whose thoughts had been too much taken up with the strange events of the day to notice Florentine’s agitation at first.

“Ah, Madame,” said Florentine, bursting into tears, “what can I say, whatever can I do? I have betrayed my lord. Ah, mon Dieu, my lady will die of it: she adore him, in spite of all his sins—she never be-

lieve him guilty—never. It will come like thunder on her dear head. Ah, Madame, I do love my lady, and I would give my life most willingly to spare her any misery—indeed I would.”

“ But what have you done—do explain—what has occurred ?” said Aunt Mary, in great alarm.

“ You know I obliged to tell the truth, and Father Murphy, he very good man—very—and I know he wish to do right. He found out that I know something about my lord ; but let me see that no one can hear, for I would not for all the world be overheard—but I think it may be right to tell you.” With these words Florentine examined the doors and looked outside to see that no one was within hearing. She then continued : “ Father Murphy suspected, or some man told him to-day, that he saw me present, many years ago, at Eyrie Lodge, when a dreadful event happened—ah, so horrible, that I often was not able to sleep at night for thinking of it, I could never drive it from my mind—terrible—makes the blood run cold ! I see it all quite plain, even now. Ah mon Dieu, pourquoi suis-je sortie ce soir là—ah, good God, help me.”

“What was it? When did you see this? You had better tell me.”

“Yet perhaps it unwise; perhaps they bring you as witness too. I fear that they going to bring me as witness; oh, *mon Dieu*, to appear against my lord—and—and he will be condemned—and, ah, *c'est trop terrible*, my lady, *elle en mourra!*”

“I think, I fear, I know something about it; is it that you were present by the cascade near Eyrie Lodge when a poor man——”

“How do you know that? I go for blackberries for little Lady Letitia; when ill she fancy some. I go by the waterfall, it was evening, and soon almost dark. As I came home under the shade of trees, I hear my lord's voice talking with man. And man say such strange things about a lost Will and children being changed, and demanded money. I could not help listening, for, on my lady's account I felt so interested, and the man threatened to disclose all this, and then they quarrel. I haste, and ran to get out of their way up to the top of the rock, and from there I could see—oh *mon Dieu!*—I see them fight; and I saw another person—a tall figure—standing a little way off, with red hood over her head; she laugh

and cry, but she did not move. And they fight and struggle as if for life—both; but at last Mr. O'Neil struck blow on the man's head, and he fall back and did not move. Then my lord knelt down and put his hand on his heart, and found he was dead; then he dragged up a great stone—but I so frightened, I crept down another way, and that make a long road to get home."

"And what became of the tall figure?"

"I was afraid to look, for there was something so terrible in the laugh and cry, the sort of long low noise, and then the wild mocking laugh, and yet she stood so still; I sure she not alive. So I afraid to look back, and never stopped till I got back to the house."

"And the family left the lodge the next day?"

"Yes; my lord did not come home that night; I lay awake all night thinking and expecting he would come. He never been the same gentleman since—never. I see that plain."

"That is certainly the case, for I have remarked it," thought Aunt Mary. "But as you say they fought, and the man tried to extort money, Morgan may have been

defending himself, and did not intend to hurt the man."

"Yes; but my lord much stronger. I thought the other spoke like an old man. Oh, terrible," said Florentine, as she buried her face in her hands, as if to shut out the horrible picture. "My lord must have been afraid the man would tell. But Father Murphy tell me he went and see the poor man's body under the stone, and say prayers over it."

"When did you tell all this to Father Murphy?"

"Late this afternoon he send for me. He said he just heard I know something of importance, and after I tell, he say he hope that nothing will be done against my lord, if he will consent to vindicate his brother Henry, who was accused of something many years ago that my lord did himself; and if he will acknowledge that he, my lord, is father to a young man they call Connor, and will provide for him (for he is like a wild man of the mountains now, and has nothing to live on but what he gets by smuggling whisky, or something of that kind), and if he will give rest to the soul of somebody by restoring a lost Will, and give Kiloran to

his brother,—all this they want him to do, and, so far as I can understand, not hurt him if he do this. Father Murphy hopes my lord will do it, because it would satisfy some persons, who otherwise would take revenge on him. The Father walk a long way dis morning, on purpose to warn my lord, and save him, for he have found out what these men mean to do. If he will consent to do what they want, and act upon Will, which they have got safe, and give up Kiloran to Mr. Henry O'Neil—if he do all this, they will not do anything to him. But my lord so obstinate, I fear he will not listen, and that he will not submit to the disgrace of it being known that he would not act upon the Will, that he took the property away from his brother all these many years. For Father Murphy says they can prove that he knew of the Will, and that he cheat his brother on purpose, and he not satisfied with all the fortune my lady bring him, but wanted all that more! Ah, mon Dieu, and yet he such a fine gentleman, might have been so happy with my lady, even if no fortune at all, and I am certain she not care for money. Could not my lady persuade him? and yet, la pauvre

ange—to think she should ever know what he accused of?”

“ And how were these alternatives to be put before him ?”

“ By a letter, which was sent to him this morning, or last night.”

This was exactly what the strange lad had told Nesta at the fête; but she had been unable to see her husband, and even if she had done so, Aunt Mary felt sure her argument would produce no impression on him. Now, however, if she were to tell him that all was on the eve of disclosure, he would be forced to submit. So she hastily finished dressing and went down to Nesta's room. Aunt Mary knew the time had now arrived when it was necessary she should know all the details of that strange affair—nothing must now be concealed. It was chiefly with a view to prepare Nesta for the worst, rather than with any hope that she would be able to influence her husband, or induce him to do anything against his own determination, that she tried to see her. But on reaching her room she found it empty; Nesta had gone down early to receive her numerous guests. So with a heavy heart Aunt Mary went into the already crowded reception-

room, and, as the sun had then just set, she remembered with dismay that the allotted time had passed. It was now too late. She, however, approached Nesta as soon as she could, and inquired whether she had succeeded in speaking to Morgan.

"No," answered Nesta, almost inarticulately. "He would not listen to me. But I hope it is all right—he says it is. Try and help me to go through this evening."

Soon afterwards, the whole party proceeded along the marble gallery, now lighted up in full splendour, and while a triumphal march was played by the band they entered the magnificent banqueting-hall.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

But mark that aged woman, how with a strange look
And contracted brow she advances towards us, about to proclaim
some intelligence.

SOPHOCLES.

TOWARDS the end of the feast, when the servants had left the hall, at the hour when the low wail had sounded the preceding evening, Nesta saw that Aunt Mary and Lord Mowbray looked anxiously in the direction of the music-gallery. A march was being played by the full band. The conversation, or rather joyous talk, the laughter and din of a hundred and fifty guests, were at their height—when through all and above all this clamour Nesta fancied she heard the old plaintive song, the low wail. It might, it must be fancy, she thought.

The march came to an end. It was nearly time for the ladies to retire, and

there was a hush in the conversation, when, suddenly, a long piercing shriek resounded through the entire hall. The shrill, unearthly voice seemed to fill the building, and then it died away into a low, plaintive wail. Every one heard it, and started at the strange and thrilling sound, and many of the guests instantly rose from the table with a feeling of vague dismay.

Nesta alone remained apparently unmoved; to her it seemed like the sad realisation of some long-expected event. But she turned her pale face in the direction of the corner under the music-gallery, where the red hood had appeared the night before. And there she distinctly saw again the figure which had preheralded the murder of her first darling child, and every horrible event that had occurred since. It turned round, and looked at her with the same gleaming eyes — those large, fiery eyes, which seemed as if the fierce flame which burned in them had the effect of throwing all other objects into a sort of dim shade. Then a mocking laugh, and a sound like clapping of hands, resounded through the hall; it echoed among the carved bosses of the lofty roof, and again died away into the

low plaintive wail: then the figure disappeared. Nesta looked round, into the faces of Aunt Mary and Lord Mowbray, but it seemed as if no one but herself had seen any figure, although every one of the guests had heard the loud laugh and mocking triumphant shout. For a few moments there was a dead silence among the guests. Some tried to laugh, and said it was part of the entertainment; that some mummers were to dance a morris-dance before the ball opened, or in the middle of it; that this was one of them. Others said that probably some accident had occurred in arranging the adjoining ball-room.

"Perhaps some one has fallen from a ladder in lighting the room," said Lady Teviot, who was not given to superstitious fears.

"Och hone, no, me dear lady," said Mrs. O'Malley, who was opposite to her; "sure that's the banshee's wail, if ever there was one in old Ireland at all at all."

And what did Morgan think? What solution did he suggest for the mysterious sound, which seemed to have terrified even the musicians, for they had not attempted

to resume the music since. He was too far off for Nesta to discern his features. But her attention was soon arrested by seeing the door open, and the butler usher in several strange men.

The butler went up to Morgan's chair on the raised dais at the end of the long table opposite to Nesta, and whispered something in his ear. She saw that he instantly got up, and after looking at some paper which one of the men held in his hand, went with them out of the hall.

Nesta half rose from her seat, as if her first impulse prompted her to follow them, but on a signal from Lord Mowbray she sat down again, and then she remarked that he, too, left the hall. She saw that her son was still sitting safe in his place by Lady Diana Mortimer, and did not appear to have been alarmed by the entrance of the men, or by any of the mysterious sounds; therefore, as it was time for the ladies to retire, she gave the signal, and they all adjourned to the ball-room.

The magnificent saloon was already half filled with guests; for the distant neighbours were determined to arrive early at a fête to which they had been looking forward

with delighted expectation for months past. A large party from Dingleford Castle, with old Mr. Verdon, his sons, and the Gordons, were already there. But Nesta could scarcely comprehend what was passing around her, although she greeted the company with her usual graceful composure. She missed Aunt Mary, and divined that she had slipped away purposely in order to try and ascertain the meaning of those strange persons' appearance. She endeavoured to console herself with the thought that Lord Mowbray was with her husband; for, in this evening of trouble and dismay, she unconsciously regarded him with something of the same old feeling of confidence, she placed the same reliance on his heart and judgment, that she had been accustomed to repose in him when she was a young girl.

Mrs. O'Malley followed Nesta with her eyes, but would not approach or speak to her, for she knew not what to say, so firmly did she believe that it was a banshee, and that some dreadful event was about to occur.

"Sure and it's not the heir, though," she said to her daughter, in a low tone, "for

he's safe and sound, and he didn't seem to think there was anything very strange in his father going off that way, and with those ill-looking men. For my part, my heart misgives me that it's to prison they're taking him ; perhaps he's spent more than he could afford" (debts being, in poor Mrs. O'Malley's mind, as they were in the minds of many wives of the spendthrift Irish gentry of that day, the grand evil of life).

"Ah, look mamma," said her daughter, "what a splendid dress that fine lady has that sat opposite you at dinner ; but how she looks down on some of our neighbours—see, she'll hardly speak to the Miss O'Flahertys, though I know they were introduced to her this morning on the stand. I suppose it's because of her diamonds ; but you're not seeing anything ; you can't take your eyes off our own lady."

"Och hone ! and 'tis she is the raal lady ; and there's not above three or four that's fit to wipe her shoes, poor dear, and it's trouble enough she has, if all tales are true."

"'Tis, indeed ; ye may well say that," said Mrs. O'Flaherty, who came up smarting from the unexpected snubbing she had received from Lady Teviot. "But tell me,

now, dear, is there anything wrong in my, in our dresses—do they look very much out of fashion?”

“Never a bit; ’tis illegant, indeed, ye are,” said Mrs. O’Malley, “and the gurls, and fine they look entirely. And ye were afraid ye did not look illegant enough, because that great lady looked sour upon ye. But, me dear, it’s not that at all at all—never a bit of it; for if it was all made of gold and silver tissue, and that you were covered all over with diamonds and rubies, such ladies as that would still look down with sovereign contempt upon you. For I was in London once, and I know well enough it’s the A-A-A’s and the O-O’s.”

“Yet Lady Ardfinnan never would have looked down upon us.”

“Ah no, indeed, the poor lady; and I to think of London fine ladies, and dress, and all these foolish things, when perhaps she is in trouble. Shame upon me!”

“And do you know, I heard that the man that won the first turn is his son, and they say he will claim it all—all the property—and that is why those people came to take his lordship away from the castle; but I don’t believe that, only I did see him speak

to our lady to-day, when she gave him the prize, and that he said something that seemed to upset Lady Ardfinnan very much."

"And so in truth it did, ye're right there," said Mrs. O'Malley; "though I was so taken up with the show and all, that I did not give it a thought at the time. But now ye remind me of it, I don't know where my thoughts were. His son! like enough, then, and he has a look of him, too. Go, my gurls, and don't be listening to what is not for your ears."

"Yes," continued Mrs. O'Flaherty, "and Larry told me they say Lord Ardfinnan drowned the young man's mother; and now I remember, indeed, a story there was many years ago, about a mad girl that tried to drown the young master, and that to save the child he threw the woman into the torrent, down there under the window of this very ball-room."

"Sure and I do, now ye come to mind me of it; and that was why the family went away and did not come back all these long years. But sure it was by accident the poor woman fell into the water; his lordship never meant to drown her."

"I don't know," said Mrs. O'Flaherty, who was less good natured and sanguine-minded than the rosy-cheeked and rosy-hearted Mrs. O'Malley, if I may use such a term—"I don't know; Larry does say that——"

"Oh, Larry M'Gree has always some dark story or other," said Mrs. O'Malley; "I hate the likes of what he's always after telling; he's always suspecting everybody of everything bad."

"Ah, there's a deal of wickedness in this world; more than ye think for—a deal more," said Mrs. O'Flaherty, shaking her head ominously. "And ye may know there is, too, in this family," she added in a low whisper; "ye may know it by the banshee. Didn't ye hear her shriek? Sure that's always a sign there has been some crime done; for when it's to warn the innocent that their last hour is coming, she always sings like beautiful music. I heard it when my poor father died;" and Mrs. O'Flaherty crossed herself devoutly. "It was more beautiful than any music I ever heard."

"That's true; for by the same token, when my poor blessed Olivia was taken to

her rest, I heard it too," said Mrs. O'Malley ; and tears started to her eyes at the recollection. " It was after her death, too, that Lady De Lacy, our darlin' lady's mother—rest her blessed soul!—took me with her to London, and was as kind as any sister to me. She took me to her grand house on the Thames, with fine gardens and flowers, only they're all black, for sure the fog was always a rising like pea-soup up from the river, and the soot a falling like flakes of black snow (which I took it for, the first time a big flake of it settled on my nose, but my maid Peggy would have it was insects) ; and the dear lady introduced me to all the first people in the land ; and some were civil and kind, and others looked as black as night ; and I know that was because I was O'Malley—it's the O-O's. Sure 'tis grateful I am to her, and to her dear daughter that's standing there looking so kind, and with quite a holy peace on her calm face, that I can almost fancy there's a glory round her head, like the picture of Saint Catherine that's painted in our chapel."

Nesta did, indeed, appear peaceful, although her mind was full of anxiety. She

had never seen this beautiful ball-room lighted up before, and as it was intended to be chiefly used by night, it was so planned that the artificial light had the effect of showing off its peculiar embellishments to the greatest advantage. As she looked on its marvellous beauty, she remembered that every part of its masterly decorations had been designed by Morgan. It was all his work. He had never yet seen it lighted up from the outside in this magical way, although he had planned it all. The poor wife never seemed to have loved him so intensely as now. All this scene of enchantment was so completely identified with him in her mind, that, in spite of her dire anxiety, she could not but see and fully feel its beauty. In fact, she purposely tried to rejoice in its charm, and thus pay her tribute of gratitude to the loved husband whose creation it was.

This ball-room was, perhaps, of all the different efforts of Morgan's genius, the most perfect and original, and the lighting was a complete success. It was light as day, brilliant as sunlight—but with the peculiar mellow tone which is only produced by artificial light. Every flower in the *pietra dura*

groups seemed brilliantly illuminated, and the sparkle of the precious stones and costly gems of which the work was composed, had quite a magic effect. It was like the fable of Aladdin's lamp—an enchanted palace had risen up before their eyes. Yet no gas or lamps, or anything that could cause the slightest smell, was used inside the room; large wax-candles were placed in candelabra, which formed graceful curves and mystic designs, and were so intertwined with garlands and festoons of flowers, which hung with them from the roof, that the light almost seemed to be produced by the flowers themselves, instead of shining on them; and the floral festoons from which they were hung were also illuminated in the same manner. Besides these lights, which, as lights, were scarcely visible individually, the windows in the coved roof which lighted it by day were illumined on the outside. Brilliant lights came down through the painted glass of which they were composed, and, on looking up to them, nothing was seen but the gorgeous figures and colouring of the stained glass, while the source of this light was hidden.

The long picture-gallery, which opened out of the ball-room at the opposite end of the banqueting-hall, was now lighted up also, for the first time. But here *all* the light shone upon the pictures, and each separate chef-d'œuvre of art received its own light in the exact corner where it was intended by the artist; so that, although by day it was lighted by windows in the roof, yet the effect now of each picture was better still.

"Sure and isn't it kind of them to have built all this fairy palace, and collected all those beautiful pictures?" said Mrs. O'Malley, as she sauntered with Mrs. O'Flaherty in the gallery.

"But he must have spent a mint o' money to be sure," rejoined her companion.

"But look! there's the little old lady they call Aunt Mary, and that kind-spoken gentleman, Lord Mowbray, who they say has never got over his love for Lady Ardfinnan, poor man; and no wonder. And I do believe she would have been happier if she had married him."

"Where are they?" said Mrs. O'Flaherty.

“Coming up from the other end of the gallery. How fast they are walking! Sure it's frightened and sad they look, both; and the poor little old lady can hardly keep pace with him. My heart misgives me that it's wanting Lady Ardfinnan they are,” said Mrs. O'Malley, as they passed hastily by her.

CHAPTER XIX.

Oh, thou lamp-holding day,
And thou splendour of Jupiter ! another,
Another everlasting life and dwelling-place
Shall be our portion.
Farewell then for me, oh beloved light.
* * * *

EURIPIDES.

I deemed that I should live in prosperity,
But it seems there is nothing else for me than to die.

SOPHOCLES.

If Nesta's fears were greater, Aunt Mary's were more definite ; for she knew what was the most probable meaning of the arrival of those men. She therefore was determined to try and ascertain the extent of Morgan's danger, and followed Lord Mowbray out of the banqueting-hall.

The numerous servants who were in attendance that night, and who he met in the passages, had informed him that their master went with the strangers into the library, and there Lord Mowbray immediately followed, where he was soon joined

by Aunt Mary. But it was some time before they could obtain admittance, for the door was locked; and when at last it was opened, what they heard made them both hasten back through the gallery to seek Nesta in the ball-room.

Nesta's eyes had wandered repeatedly towards the large door that led into the picture-gallery, in anxious expectation that either Aunt Mary or Lord Mowbray would come to tell her the cause of her husband's sudden departure from the banquet.

And now the dancing had begun. Roland had already opened the ball with Lady Diana Mortimer. Nesta could bear the suspense no longer. Leaving the ball-room, she entered the picture-gallery just as Lord Mowbray and Aunt Mary were passing through it, and were being watched by Mrs. O'Malley. Now that they were come, Nesta dreaded to ask—she dreaded to hear what their anxious looks betrayed.

"He is in the library," said Aunt Mary, who was desirous to relieve her from apprehension as to his present state of safety.

"Yes, he is in the library," repeated Lord Mowbray. "But, dear Nesta, you must be prepared—you must be prepared to hear,"

he continued, as they all three hastened along the picture-gallery.

"She is—she will be," said Aunt Mary, interrupting him; "for although he is threatened with imprisonment, it is not worse than I knew, or suspected, for some time past."

"Who is—why should he be threatened with imprisonment?"

"But this is more than suspicion," said Lord Mowbray; "it is proved——"

"Stay," said Aunt Mary, "let me try to explain——"

"What! Oh, tell me the worst!" said Nesta. "I can bear anything better than suspense."

"It is proved," said Lord Mowbray, "that a poor man, called Michael Hennessy, was killed near Eyrie Lodge."

"Killed! Oh Heavens! Why—what is this new horror?"

"He was brother to old Mrs. O'More, and, it seems, knew of the suppression of the Will, and——"

"Ah, that Will! It is, then, my fault—and that was my doing—I am guilty of this—let me see him—I must—I will not believe—he cannot be guilty."

She dashed wildly from them towards the library. They immediately followed. When they approached it, sounds of altercation reached their ears. The door was still locked.

Nesta shrieked wildly for admittance, and they heard Morgan's voice within, saying, "Let her in—I will see her once more, and then I will go with you."

The door was opened, and Nesta rushed into her husband's arms. He pressed her to his breast for a moment, then held her face in his two hands, and looked earnestly into it, as if bidding adieu to all that was good and holy in this world.

"Forgive me," he said, "dearest Nesta, for all the unhappiness I have caused you. How many times have I grieved you! and if—if there is any pardon to be obtained, your—your prayers will accomplish it. You will never forget me, I know." Then he whispered low in her ear, "I could not endure life with shame. I could not face a public trial. Another look——" He again held her head, and gazed as if his very soul was shining out to her in his eyes. Then, with one sudden bound, he dashed through the window which opened on the narrow

terrace overhanging the torrent, and, before any one was aware of his intention, he disappeared in the darkness outside.

One sharp cry of agony was heard, and then no sound but the rushing torrent. In another moment the narrow terrace was full of people and lights, but no trace of Morgan could be seen. The black torrent below only surged and roared with its usual fury on its impetuous course.

"See, there's part of his dress, though," said one of the servants, who was leaning over the battlement with a light. "His lordship must have struck against that rock; no doubt he must have stuck there for a second, and that was when we heard his voice crying out with pain."

"Oh, search for him—run, fly, down to the Mermaid's Cave—down under the rock!" shrieked Nesta. "There is—there must be—a communication between it and the river, for I sometimes think Nelly O'More might have been saved in that manner. Oh, save him! save him! and I will give you thousands, thousands—everything you want or ask—only save him! I'll show the way," she continued; "for, if he dives down low, and finds the opening, he might come up

into the cave. I'll go down and show the way." And, with the presence of mind and apparent composure which the great necessity for action gave her, she proceeded back into the library, then through the long passages, until she came to the low postern-gate under the Eagle's Tower. She was, of course, followed by Lord Mowbray, and all those who had become aware of the awful catastrophe—among the foremost was Roland—for the rumour had spread like lightning over the ball and banqueting rooms.

The narrow stairs which led down to the Mermaid's Cave were crowded with eager steps, and curious faces peered out from all the windows and battlements that looked upon the river.

Nesta, with her son and Lord Mowbray, were of course the first of all the throng that streamed down that winding stair, and were the first to reach the Mermaid's Cave. She pointed out a narrow aperture that was in the rock at the farther end of the cavern. It was an aperture so small that it was only just large enough to admit one person at a time, and then only by crawling on the hands and feet.

“I will go first,” said Lord Mowbray, as Nesta was preparing to bend down and follow. He did so; and, after proceeding a little way, considered that she might venture in, but that it would be unsafe for more to enter, the cave being long and narrow, with only a slippery ledge of rock to stand upon. “There is no room in this place for more than two or three,” he cried out to Roland. “It is not safe for more—keep them back.”

At the bottom of the cave, the dark waters rose and fell in uncertain quantities at uncertain intervals. Nesta crept up beside Lord Mowbray, and watched the black pool, while the water bubbled up over the ledge of rock, saturating her clothes, and sometimes rendering her position very insecure.

“What is that? do I not see something white?” she suddenly exclaimed, straining her eyes into the black waters; “perhaps it is a part of his dress, and he may yet be saved. Oh, help to——”

Lord Mowbray saw it too, and bending down, he stretched out a long flagstaff, which he had hastily torn down, on his way, from some of the festal decorations,

and with great difficulty succeeded in drawing the object out of the water. It was Morgan's little white handkerchief, with the coronet and initials in the corner.

More lights were called for. Torches, lanterns, wax-candles, even tapers from the sconces in the ball-room, gleamed through the mist, till the terrace shone like a festal chamber, and the rushing torrent below could be seen as by day.

"And more lights yet—search farther down the river!" was the cry that pierced through the hum of many voices. It was Nesta who uttered that cry of woe. Then a moving train of light was seen to wind far along the course of the river, and Nesta watched its progress with straining eyes from the terrace, until she was forcibly led into the house by her son.

To drag the river for the body was all that now remained to do, and it was done. The cold grey dawn appeared, and its ghastly light shone on the castle towers and on the glen, but no trace had been discovered of Morgan O'Neil.

CHAPTER XX.

Oh sands of my country's shore
And mountain woods, where with swift-footed dogs
He was wont to slay the wild beasts.

* * * * *

The sleepless song that dwelt under the bridge of chords
Shall cease throughout thy father's house.

EURIPIDES.

It is impossible to describe the confusion and dismay which followed that horrible tragedy. Of the numerous guests, many were unwilling to leave the castle till some more positive information could be had as to the fate of the owner, yet all felt that they ought to retire from the festive scene as soon as possible.

Many of the more indifferent, or least interested in the fate of the family, wandered about in the still brilliantly-lighted halls, and some partook of the refreshments which

abounded in the banqueting-hall. But these, of course, conversed almost in whispers ; all mirth and gaiety were effectually hushed !

Mrs. O'Flaherty made conspicuous efforts to get her carriage, and so did many other persons ; but it was almost impossible, for many of the strange servants—who little cared whether one man more or less had been drowned, and did not see why so much ado should be made—seized on the opportunity to make the most of the unwonted good cheer, and then, of course, soon became so drunk that they were totally incapacitated from harnessing the horses, and still less from driving their masters home.

Mrs. O'Malley was really anxious to be of use, if possible ; she remained near Aunt Mary, and on several occasions during that awful night did good service, by carrying messages and doing various other things which were important in such a scene of dire confusion. Some of the guests who were staying at Carrigroghan, and could get no carriages to return there that night, went to bed in the rooms which belonged to other people, and were soon sunk in a profound sleep. But some of them, such

as Lord and Lady Dumbleton, Mr. Praid, and others, felt real concern and anxiety for Nesta, which kept them up during the whole night.

Lady Teviot was one of those who could get no carriage to return to her comfortable apartments at Carrigroghan, and as she piqued herself rather upon her stoical indifference to what she called the weaknesses of others—although she was indulgent enough to her own luxurious tastes—she did not see why she should be deprived of a good night's rest because a sad event had occurred, particularly as it had defrauded her of the night of festivity, which she came over all the way from England on purpose to enjoy. Therefore, she singled out one of the most comfortable-looking bedrooms she could find, and by the marquis's coronet and initials upon the pincushion which lay on the dressing-table, she saw it was Lady Dumbleton's, as she afterwards told her. "You know, my dear," she said, "I was certain your feelings would keep you up with Lady Ardfinnan all the night; but I could do her no good, and I thought it a pity all the comforts and luxuries in that

nice warm room should be wasted. So I undressed regularly, as well as I could without a maid, and put on your pretty wrapper that lay before the fire—by-the-by, I must have one exactly like it; I never felt anything so light and warm—and then I laid down on your bed. My only fear was lest Lord Dumbleton, who being less sensitive than your acutely-feeling self, should not be able to keep himself awake through the night of turmoil, and he might come to the room, thinking, perhaps, it was you—so I locked the door, and then had such a good night's rest, that I was not at all disturbed by the row I know there must have been!"

Day began to dawn, and the numerous lights which still illumined the festive halls were mingled or tinged with the cold sad reality of a gloomy day in this work-a-day world; most of the watchers experienced the kind of depression which this cold, misery-showing light produced. And to Nesta, the appearance of daylight was the great and final extinguisher of every hope which lingered on during the dark uncertain hours of the night.

He could not have survived all this time, that was impossible—she gave up hope; she laid down her head like a weary child on Aunt Mary's bosom, and clasped her hands in prayer, and tried to say in her heart, "Thy will be done."

She strove to arrest all thought, all feeling, but this; she repeated the words in something of the same kind of manner in which we try to lull ourselves to repose when violent pain of body or mind drives sleep from our weary eyes. For there was nothing more to do. The time was passed when action could give any hope: the full weight of reality lay on her benumbed heart. Nothing could now avail. He was gone. Gone from this world for ever. Ah! whither had his spirit fled? That was the question which caused the real agony.

But there is mercy, and the prayers of the righteous avail much. And after a time she remembered that last look. He had loved her at last. She had been the last thought on his mind—the object for whom he cared most.

"He did love me," she repeated aloud, as

if seeking for comfort. "He never loved me so much before—never!"

And to lose him now, when he might have learnt to love her better—ah, it was a trial indeed. But her well-trained mind and cultivated heart would not dwell long on this. She recurred to the blessed thought that he did not part from her in anger. No bitterness, no pride alloyed that one rapturous moment when he gazed into her face—it was *all* love!

"And will he not be forgiven? He loved me," she repeated, as if to drive away any and every other thought and fear. "He loves me still: God be praised, and make me grateful for this joy, the fulfilment of the one great wish, and hope, and prayer, of so many long years."

"Yes, he loved you at last," said Aunt Mary, as if divining her thoughts. "I always said that your persevering tenderness, your prayerful love, would vanquish his proud heart. You called forth the better feelings at last; and although the force of habitual pride and worldly ambition was more than his untutored mind could stand—and so he shrank from the disgrace of being

convicted of crime—yet his last thoughts and his last feelings were devoted to the good he had learnt to admire and to love in you.”

“And there is hope, then?”

“The same hope, I trust, that was given by our blessed Saviour to the thief on the cross.”

* * * * *

CHAPTER XXI.

Z. To discover my mother thou bringest forth these things.

P. Since the gods wills it, but not before.

EURIPIDES.

"I DON'T believe a word of it; I think it's a fabrication. He could never have been convicted of such crimes—a wild, improbable story it is: the only witnesses a French maid and a good-for-nothing blackguard—a sort of outlaw. I'll never believe it."

This was the good Lord Dumbleton's indignant remark as soon as he could get Mr. Praid to listen to him.

"It does seem an improbable story," said Mr. Praid; "but still, unless Lord Ardfinnan's guilt could be fully proved, he never would have committed suicide. Besides, in one case, I know he was guilty; and but for his wife's sake, I would never have entered his doors. That story about his brother—the suppressed Will."

“ Ah, that was bad, indeed ; but then this story about the children being changed——”

“ I am not sure whether that can be quite proved. It was only a story told by some old nurse.”

“ And what will Lady Ardfinnan do about it, do you suppose ?”

“ Try to make Lady Glenmaurice confess, I should think. That would be my advice. I cannot help saying that it always seemed to me that Letitia was much more like her. That young fellow Roland has never been influenced by his mother ; she has never had the power over him she ought, and that girl Letitia so fond of her ! It often puzzled me extremely. It crosses my mind now whether she did not herself suspect something of the kind, or had heard some hint of it in her nursery.”

“ Well ; but then Henry O’Neil would succeed to the Ardfinnan peerage, and thirty thousand a year also, that is clear.”

“ Quite ; I fear poor Nesta’s fortune will be sadly encumbered by all the neglect of late years, and all these extravagant fêtes.”

“ Yes, but she won’t mind that ; she would be as happy in a cottage. Di and I have often said so. I can’t help feeling great

compassion for poor Morgan, even if he were guilty of such fearful crimes; and I know Nesta will suffer from his loss for a long, long time. He was a monstrous clever fellow—might have been anything if he had had any real high principles. No; bad won't do in the long run—often said so to Di. By-the-by, what is this strange report about Letitia being married to Lord Blandon?"

"Married! what can you mean?"

"I can't believe it. I am certain there's no truth in it; for she has far too much spirit to be awed into it by her mother, though Lady Glenmaurice is the most artful woman I ever met with. Lucky escape I had from her—narrow one, too. I am certain, if it had not been for your good sense in always reminding me so of Di, I should have fallen into her clutches. Pah! Well, Di had a letter from Lady G. to-day, and she says that little Jack Surtees had told her he had just heard that Lady Letitia Glenmaurice has married Lord Blandon. Some debt, or bet, or cheating transaction or other, Lady Glenmaurice had with him, and that he threatened to disclose the whole unless her daughter consented to marry him."

"I don't believe it, nor do I even think that Lord Blandon could ever care sufficiently about any lady to take much trouble about it."

"Well, that's what I should have thought too; he has no heart. But I must not be too hard upon him, for I dare say I should have become just as bad myself if it hadn't been for Di. I was on the high road——"

"Well, I want you now to talk of business. I wish you would make your wife take Lady Ardfinnan and Aunt Mary over to Knutsford Hall, and leave Mowbray and me to settle all the affairs here. We have sent off for Henry O'Neil, and he must, of course, take possession of his property of Kiloran. Father Murphy tells me he has succeeded in getting possession of the missing Will, and will give it to him as soon as he arrives."

"I am certain Di will do whatever you think best. The only thing I don't understand is, what has cleared up the mystery now? Why could it not have been known years ago that Henry O'Neil had not seduced that girl?"

"There was no one to hunt up the truth; for Henry O'Neil would not, and the right

people did not come forward. There is always so much wild attachment to the chieftain of any old family among the Irish peasantry. And now the reason of it all coming to light is a strange and dramatic story enough. It appears that this illegitimate son of Morgan's—this wild Connor—had become tired of his lawless and uncertain subsistence up in the mountains, and was determined to induce his father to give him an allowance. He had sought one or two private interviews with Morgan, but both times Morgan refused to listen, and it is said drove Connor away with threats. Connor then, it seems, wrote a letter to him, in which he again appealed to his feelings, and, I believe, ended by threatening him that, unless he granted his request, some disclosures would be made which would bring disgrace. This letter arrived on the morning of the fête, and I found that poor Lady Ardfinnan saw him read and burn it with an expression of defiance. And he was also appealed to in the course of that fatal day both by the young man himself and by Father Murphy. When all this failed, Connor resolved to appear the night of the fête in the banqueting-hall—openly proclaim Lord Ardfinnan as his

father before all the guests there assembled, bring witnesses to prove his statement, also the lost Will, and demand an allowance or annuity from Lord Ardfinnan. In case of his refusal to do this—then, and not until then, did he mean to threaten Morgan with the accusation and proofs of his having murdered old Hennessy. But all this programme was changed in consequence of this young Connor having been badly hurt at the tournament by his brother Roland! For one of his lawless companions who had come with him, supposing that he was ‘kilt,’ as he called it, went, out of a feeling of revenge, and disclosed the whole story—the murder of Michael Hennessy and all—to a magistrate, in the presence of witnesses.”

“It’s an awful business,” said Lord Dumbleton. “I can’t make it out. I wish I could be of use to any one in the matter—especially to poor Lady Ardfinnan. I wonder where everybody is?”

This question was answered by the look of the house as they entered it. The entrance-hall, staircases, and corridors were filled with the evidences of departure. Men-servants were carrying trunks—ladies’-maids were carrying cloaks and bags—ladies and gentle-

men were crowded together in groups—
anxious to leave the house, yet quite uncertain as to the time and means of being able to do so. Half-sobered coachmen and grooms were bringing round to the door mud-stained carriages belonging to some of the neighbours who had been vainly waiting for them all night. The whole scene showed, perhaps, more than anything else, the terrible reality of the previous night's tragic occurrence.

CHAPTER XXII.

How many things mortals are able to know by seeing,
But ere he have seen, no prophet of the future
Can predict what his actions will be.

SOPHOCLES.

WE left Edwin O'Neil endeavouring to invigorate his power of enduring the suspense which he could not annihilate. As soon as his mother left the room, he forced himself to write some lines of a poem that he had begun a few days before.

It was at first a very difficult task, but by degrees the interest of the subject engrossed his attention, and he wrote some of the best verses he had yet produced.

He wrote on till the narrow strip of dawn that found its way between the tapestry curtains of the window paled the candle's light, and he wrote on after he had undrawn the curtains and extinguished it. Happy those who, like him, are gifted with strong health

of mind and body, and who have learnt how to enjoy these rare gifts in their highest and fullest sense !

“ I hate those perfect characters,” perhaps some reader may say ; “ they are always so very uninteresting ; besides, if he really loved that girl, he would not have become so interested in his foolish writing—I could not.”

And in one sense, perhaps, you are right, they are uninteresting ; but mind, you are only right when this feeling is caused by the conviction you may perhaps have that they want nothing—that such, in real life, depend not on the support of your opinion. But beware lest this dislike should spring (as, alas ! it often, nay, generally does) from jealousy, and from a cowardly dislike to behold what your inmost heart tells you you ought to try and imitate. Alas ! we are all prone to hate what we know is better than ourselves.

Nay, more—we naturally prefer to contemplate those characters which are worse than ourselves ! When we are forced to behold those who have attained a higher degree of goodness, who are less far from perfection, we either coldly acknowledge their worth, with the inward reservation that

they have had more advantages, and have been subjected to fewer temptations than ourselves. Or, what is worse, we sometimes are cowardly enough to stifle the warning instinct towards good, and then this self-indulgent feeling induces us to hate those who personate the goodness which we scarcely wish to imitate.

At an early hour the next morning Eva was ready to accompany her son to Collini's studio. When they arrived there, they found that he was out, therefore Eva determined to proceed at once to Grosvenor-square. Edwin remained at a corner of the square, whilst Eva prepared herself to encounter alone the probable impertinence of the insolent footman. She knocked, however, with such purposely decided courage, that the worthy Thomas was deceived into thinking that it must be a footman who accompanied ladies.

"Who in the world can be coming at this time of the morning?" he muttered, as he drew on his coat. "Perhaps my lady com'd back—it's a'most like John's knock."

"Can I see Lady Letitia Glenmaurice?" inquired Eva, who thought it wiser not to ask if she were at home.

Thomas eyed her from head to foot before he committed himself, and then, with somewhat less insolence than he had evinced towards the others, he said, "Her ladyship left town yesterday."

"Left town? Oh, then can I see Lord Glenmaurice? I know he is ill," continued Eva, who saw that Thomas was surprised, by the insolent smile that began to dawn on his face. "I know he is ill, and that he does not know anybody; but I am an old friend of several members of his family, and I particularly wish to see him."

Thomas was puzzled, and, in spite of himself, was somewhat awed by Eva's commanding look and air.

"Well, it's a real lady, there's no doubt about that," he thought; and said, after a pause, "Well, ma'am, I'll ask the nurse if his lordship can be seen. What name shall I say?"

"Mrs. O'Neil."

Thomas was again puzzled; but said he should go and ask Mrs. Probyn, the nurse. Eva was desirous to ascertain whether Letitia was really gone, and thought that some of the other servants might be more

ready to enlighten her than the insolent footman.

Mrs. Probyn came down and scanned Eva from head to foot; her countenance was not prepossessing, but she seemed on the whole to approve, and expressed her willingness to take Eva to Lord Glenmaurice's room. "Though it's of no use, ma'am" (she added), "which he don't know nobody. And I only came last night, whereby Lady Letitia isn't at home. I often attend his lordship, but not regular. My lady thinks he can't have no better attendance than Lady Letitia, when she's at home. And she was called away yesterday on account of my lady's illness."

"Lady Glenmaurice is ill, then?"

"Yes, ma'am; she sent to say that she was ill, and wished her daughter to come to her, and I was to come off at once to attend my lord."

"You have lived a long time in the family?"

"That I have—more than five-and-twenty years," she replied, with a curious expression of countenance that attracted Eva's notice.

"No doubt Lady Glenmaurice has such

confidence in you, she will feel no anxiety about him while you are with him."

"You may see his lordship now, if you like, ma'am," said Mrs. Probyn, with somewhat of a less forbidding look. She was evidently softened by Eva's pleasant appearance, and they went into his room.

He looked up with a kind of anxious curiosity as they approached his chair, and then, as if disappointed at not seeing what he had wished for or expected, his head sank down again with a look of meek despondency that touched Eva's heart.

"I suppose he expected to see Lady Letitia," said she to the nurse, and as she purposely pronounced the name of his daughter very distinctly, he again looked up and fixed his eyes on her face. Perhaps it's kind and sympathising expression reminded him of his daughter, for he put out one of his thin hands. She took it within hers, and he seemed pleased, and his lips moved as they did when Letitia was near.

"I believe he takes you for Lady Letitia," said the nurse. "It's because you look so kindly at him, which there's not many as looks at him in that way, poor gentleman."

On leaving the house, Eva found her son

had been joined by Signor Collini at the corner of Grosvenor-street, and she saw at once by their looks that they had heard some worse news than had reached her ears.

"That blackguard has carried her off," said Edwin; "at least, that is what Collini has heard. But can it be true? Is Mr. Surtees really likely to know?"

"He says he saw her with his own eyes in the railway carriage with Lord Blandon. He came up yesterday from Northampton, and he got out on the platform just as another train was going to start, and saw Lady Letitia in the same carriage."

"And did she see him?"

"No, he said not; but Lord Blandon did, and waved his hand, as if in triumph, when the train was going off."

"What can be the meaning of this?"

"An infamous plan of Lady Glenmaurice's. I think I see it all now," said Eva. "I gathered from the old nurse that Lady Glenmaurice sent off express for her daughter, saying that she was very ill. So off the poor girl went, little suspecting who was to be her companion in the train."

"An express train, perhaps, and no one else in the carriage! She may be a whole

hour alone with him," said Edwin, twisting his watch-chain till it snapped in two, and tore his gloves with the broken links.

"Not likely to be alone," said Eva. "I am certain she was not. I feel sure she would sooner have thrown herself out before the train started, when she discovered he was there, unless some other people were in it."

"Yes, that is more likely," said Signor Collini, "unless the report be true, and that she is really going to marry him."

"Even then she would not have gone alone with him, I am certain," said Eva. "Yet, if her mother is bent upon the marriage, she will be subjected to great annoyance." Then, after a pause, she asked Signor Collini if Mr. Surtees had told him where Lady Glenmaurice was?

"Yes, at Sir Morland's; but this make me no wiser, and Mr. Surtees not know much of him, except he a ver rich young man."

"I should like to go to his place," said Edwin, after a moment's thought. "I wish I knew his name exactly."

"Sir Morland," repeated Collini, with a perfect conviction that this description was sufficient.

“Go to the club—you were elected yesterday—and look at the Baronetage,” suggested Eva.

He did so. The Baronetage named a Sir George and a Sir Herbert Morland; one in a midland county, the other in the north of Scotland. Which was it? He tried the very improbable chance of getting information from one or two men he knew at the club. Such a chance was improbable enough, anyhow, but especially, perhaps, in Edwin's case, and he failed.

He had but few friends. He had not been what is called popular at Oxford. On the one hand, the sensitiveness of his nature produced a backwardness and reserve which prevented his being known to the few who could have appreciated him; and, on the other, his life and conduct was a living rebuke to the unthinking and downward falling portion of society. He saw too plainly the consequences of the eternal misery-seeking and really unenjoying-present lives they led, to evince that kind of tolerant approbation of them which is necessary to win their familiarity. He would willingly suffer for them, if he could by so doing avert the fate they were working out to themselves; but

he felt that to smile at their excesses, or laugh with them at their foolish deeds, or show approbation of their faults, would only tend to confirm them in their delusion. Yet he was quite devoid of the pharisaical feeling, "I am holier than thou." On the contrary, his conviction of the danger of overlooking the beginnings of sin, proceeded chiefly from a knowledge of himself. He judged others by himself; he found that without an unceasing endeavour to live according to God's law, he should, perhaps, be worse than any of them, inasmuch as he possessed a larger and more deeply passionate nature. It was because he saw the extent of the difficulty that he trembled for those who did not.

None of these butterflies intended to become bad; they would have scorned the imputation of theft, murder, or any positive vulgar vices; yet they were unconsciously laying the foundation of them; they were acquiring the disposition and habits which would dispose them to the commission of crime. For the fancied enjoyment of what they call pleasure is the first step towards such a state.

And Edwin felt that as we advance in

years and thought, our horror of crime, as well as our leniency to criminals, ought to increase. We have discovered the so-called innocent beginnings which lead to sin; we have seen plainly that the bulk of mankind look approvingly at the laws which civilisation makes for itself, but which are quite as much at variance with the precepts of revealed religion as they are with the innate perceptions of good and evil which God has given to mankind in all ages and countries—at variance with the “witness” mentioned in Scripture—which witness was in the old heathen world the admiration and veneration for whatever is beautiful and good.

How the suffering soul gets through the long hours of necessary inaction, is a problem which many of us have had to solve by personal experience. It often seems beyond endurance, and yet we find ourselves on the other side of those long hours able to endure more still. Several days passed thus. At length, on the fourth or fifth morning, a letter bearing the Irish postmark arrived at the house in that dark street.

“That is Lord Mowbray’s handwriting,” said Henry O’Neil, to whom the letter was

addressed. "That handwriting is always connected in my mind with something pleasant and kind."

"It always makes me happy to see it," said Eva.

But this time the happy-making handwriting did not produce its usual effect, for an exclamation of horror and dismay broke from him as soon as his eyes had glanced over the first page. "Ah, Morgan! my poor brother!" he said, "has it come to this!" and covering his face with his hands, he remained as if paralysed with horror. Eva took up the letter, and motioned to her son to come and read it with her.

"You see Lady Ardfinnan is coming over to you," said Edwin, at length. "Look here, she is coming with Lady Dumbleton to Knutsford Hall, and she wants you to be there to meet her. My father's presence is requested in Ireland at once, as everything is in confusion at Dermot Castle. He must start this very day—and I—what can I do—about—Lady Letitia——"

Eva rose at once. The expression of her beautiful face was one of calm sorrowing resolve.

"Go to Grosvenor-square," she said to

Edwin, in a firm yet tearful voice. "Go there, and ask Letitia's address. If you cannot get it, go at once to Sir John Morland's house in Berkshire, and if they are not there, then go to the North. When you have found the right house, insist on seeing Lady Glenmaurice. Propose openly for Letitia, saying who you are, and *what you now* are. You are now, you see by this letter, heir to Kiloran, and therefore justified in proposing for her."

Edwin obeyed mechanically. Perhaps he would have done the same of his own accord, but now he was acting under the gentle mesmerism of a mother's anxiety. As he was leaving the room, Eva, who had been reading the remainder of the letter, said, as she pointed to a postscript:

"You see, you have something that is more forcible than right with her—you have power—in the event of things being desperate. Your own good sense will make you cautious of using it; but, if worst comes to worst, you have it in your power to save Letitia from being actually married to Lord Blandon. You see what Lord Mowbray says of those rumours as to the children being changed."

She kissed his forehead, and, breathing a prayer for him, sent him away. Edwin proceeded at once to Grosvenor-square.

Strongly were joy and sorrow mingled in Eva's heart as she prepared for her journey to Knutsford Hall. Grief, horror, hope—and all three on account of those most beloved by her—put in their claims alternately.

CHAPTER XXIII.

It behoves a noble man to obey those in authority.

SOPHOCLES.

ALL this time Letitia, the object of so many and various rumours and surmises, was suffering extremely, and totally ignorant of all the occurrences which had come to light, and which concerned herself so nearly.

But, to return to the time when we left her stepping into the carriage, in order to fulfil her engagement with Signor Collini. When in the very act of doing so, she was startled by receiving a note from her mother. It was brought by the servant who had accompanied Lady Glenmaurice in her country visits. He said he had been sent off express to fetch her, for that Lady Glenmaurice was dangerously ill; that there

would be just time for them to catch the afternoon train if she would consent to start at once. The note was to the same effect. Honoria said she was extremely ill, and that she had set her heart on seeing Letitia at once; that her old friends, Mrs. and Miss Lorraine, were coming down, and would chaperone her in the train, so that there would be no difficulty or danger in her setting off by herself. She added, in a post-script, that Mrs. Probyn had been sent for to go to Grosvenor-square immediately, to attend on Lord Glenmaurice.

Letitia saw that there was no alternative. She got into the carriage, leaving word that her things should be sent by a later train; the servant jumped on the box, and they dashed off at a great pace to the station. There she found, as her mother's note had led her to expect, an escort—Mrs. and Miss Lorraine, who were going to Sir John Morland's, and they proposed to accompany her in the train. So she got into the carriage with them.

As the train was about to start, somebody called out, "Just in time, by Jove!"

The voice made Letitia tremble with dread, and, turning round, she saw the

door opened, while Lord Blandon jumped into the carriage, and sat down by her side at the moment the train started.

It was already in motion, yet Letitia's first impulse was to jump out. Then she remembered that Mrs. Lorraine was opposite, and Miss Lorraine on the other side, and that it would appear strange to them; therefore, she felt she must remain, and she tried to look as composed as possible.

They seemed to be acquainted with Lord Blandon, and talked as if they had expected that he would accompany them; and what annoyed her most was, that he did not seem surprised at finding herself there.

"Ah, ah! Lady Glenmaurice ill!" he said, in a laughing and exulting tone. "Yes, I know—sent for you to come to her. Poor lady!—very sorry—nice day, though—this is a confounded line of shaky rails;" and he continued to talk on as if half to himself for some time.

Letitia knew very little about her two lady companions, beyond that Mrs. Lorraine was a weak, good-natured, indifferent kind of person, and that her daughter belonged to the class then coming into fashion—called "fast."

Letitia ventured to ask Miss Lorraine, who sat by her side, whether she had often been to stay at Sir John Morland's.

"Oh yes," said that flippant young lady, "often—very jolly house—dancing and play all night—riding, and hunting, and shooting all day. I and my mother are there now—came up to town for the day."

"You caught a bad cold out hunting last time we were there," said Mrs. Lorraine. "Very imprudent—will kill herself some day—so thoughtless."

Miss Lorraine was one of those fast young ladies whose reign of fashion, it is to be hoped, is on the decline—who strive to imitate the air and manners of the "pretty horse-breakers" pointed out admiringly to their notice in the Park or at the theatres by their male friends.

"Shockin' bad line this—worst in England," said Lord Blandon, again making an attempt to address Letitia. "Have you been ridin' lately?—pleasant enough now in the Park—nobody there—can have Rotten Row to yourself," he continued.

He generally left out half his words, as well as part of the syllable, when speaking, not from want of time, for that commodity

always hung heavy on his hands, but half from indolence and a sort of dim consciousness that nobody was really attending to him, although many people affected to do so with great reverence, and to care much for what he said.

"Is my mother really ill?" inquired Letitia, who now fancied it was all a trick to make her travel down with Lord Blandon.

"So she says," said Miss Lorraine; "but I think she is needlessly frightened about herself."

All this time the train was going at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Oh most miserable woman that I am, on account of my wayward temper.

ECCEPTESS.

BUT Lady Glenmaurice was ill; and, what is worse, she was uncomfortable in mind as well as in body. Yet the chief speculations of her life had succeeded; for she was too clever to aim at what was unattainable. She had met with the success that usually attends that kind of shallow talent we call cleverness, or rather ploddingness of mind—the unswerving, dogged determination which never loses sight of its object, is sometimes mistaken for genius, than which it is a far easier quality to direct and control. But it requires really more than this kind of cleverness to discover whether success will produce happiness. Few persons have much natural

appreciation of true happiness, still fewer have sufficient largeness of mind to enable them to discover the causes which produce it.

Like Morgan, Honoria had never even aimed at true happiness—few people do; but, like him, she had been eminently successful, and obtained all she had wished for—precisely all. She was now one of the most influential women in London. As far as her intentions had gone, she had now scarcely anything more to desire. Her beauty was still great, she was still a queen among the beauties even in the ball-rooms; but the rouge she wore made her queen only by candlelight, for she had recourse now, to art to renovate and hide, and her colouring was very different from the fresh hue of youth that still dwelt on Eva's fair face, although the latter had passed the chief portion of her life in that dark street in the city, without apparent variety or amusement.

Besides the want of freshness in Honoria's complexion, there were *lines*—lines which self-indulgent ill temper had produced; and lately, since her chief ends were attained, since she could scarcely rise higher in the

world of fashion and influence, and that she required more and greater excitement to save her from dying of ennui, she had taken to gambling. She played in every kind of manner—with cards, by bets on races, on marriages, on the pronunciation of words—and a few days before her illness she had experienced some heavy losses.

As she lay on her sick-bed, these losses would recur most provokingly to her mind, and she felt sure that, unless she could persuade Letitia to accept Lord Blandon, there would be no means of paying her debts of honour. That disagreeable youth had declared himself to be madly in love with Letitia, and said he would do anything to induce her to marry him. And Honoria determined to make the most of her illness now, and to work upon her daughter's feelings.

She was anxious to accomplish this marriage, also, for several other reasons.

It so happened that Lord Blandon's sister, who was the only person that cared much about his well-being, was a very great lady, and she belonged to the very unexceptionable set. Of late Honoria had found her doubtful character had become a

hindrance and considerable drawback ; so that she was looked shyly upon by this very set into which she was determined now to be admitted, although before she had despised it as being dull.

Some enemy—Lady Teviot she was sure it was—had spread reports injurious to her character, which she feared were gaining ground.

Now, Lady Snowdon, Lord Blandon's sister, was aware of his predilection, and thought that if he were to marry some nice person whom he really liked, it would save him. So that, although she disapproved of Lady Glenmaurice, she was determined to overlook this objection, if Lady Letitia could be the means of saving her brother.

On the day when Honoria expected her daughter to arrive, she repeatedly looked at her watch, and, as five o'clock approached, she carefully washed off the rouge from her cheeks, that she might look more ill and suffering.

"They ought to be here by this time," she thought, after she had got herself well up for the occasion. She rang for her maid. No one answered it, although she could hear the down-stairs bell ring plainly.

"That dreadful Spinners!" thought the imperious lady; "gone out again. She thinks of nothing but amusing herself—it's really too bad. I am a complete victim to bad servants. Ah, that poor Florentine, how often I have missed her!" And she rang again, more violently than before.

At last, an impudent-looking housemaid answered the bell, and asked what she wanted.

"Where is Spinners?"

"Out riding, I believe, my lady, in the dog-cart, with Mouseer Jackeymo and the other walleys."

"Riding, indeed; too bad; can't stand this any longer; this house is enough to spoil all servants.—Is the carriage come back from the station?"

"Not that I know of, my lady."

"Very odd, so late; actually six o'clock. Well, send Spinners as soon as she comes in, and tell her I've been waiting for my tea above an hour. What can have delayed them? Perhaps that old nurse was not ready, and kept John waiting just to upset such a well-arranged plan." Then, as her thoughts were directed towards this

old nurse, they assumed a still more gloomy hue. "I must pension her off," thought she; "I must pay well for her silence. To think she has it in her power to ruin me! Strange! Why should I dread this exposure so much more now? Why have I only lately seen the value of character? I suppose, because I have attained everything but that; and now I want the good set I have often despised and thought so dull; I want them to admire me. I hate Lady Teviot and her vile inuendoes and gossip. I know she has set them all afloat, and now that she is on a visit to Morgan in Ireland, she will be sure to see or hear something to confirm her suspicions."

These, and many other disagreeable thoughts, haunted Honoria's mind during those lonely hours when she was too ill to read, or otherwise distract her attention from herself.

She looked out upon the neatly farmed bare country that stretched beyond the narrow belt of park which was on that side of the house. There was nothing to break the dull monotony of the landscape; it resembled the future of her own life: without hope,

without object, without affection. Her thoughts wandered back to her happy girlhood. Once more in fancy she saw the rich and varied landscape from her father's castle : Dingleford Bay, reflecting the bright hues of the sky above it, its rocky shores and bold headlands covered with woods sloping down to the limpid waters, the blue mountains far away, the little white town skirting the coast-line in the middle distance. Again the sweet scent of the wild thyme and arbutus-trees seemed wafted upon the evening air, mingled with the odour of a thousand flowers in the terraced gardens. "Why did I lose Morgan? Why did I leave it all?" she thought, "and my poor dear father, and now——"

She remembered that, besides her own gambling debts, her eldest son was always getting into difficulties, and she dreaded to think that if poor old Lord Glenmaurice were to die, she would be very badly off. In these hours of reflection she could not help seeing that the ruin of her eldest son had been in a great measure her own fault. She had totally neglected him; and now she saw with dismay that, were his father to

die and he succeed to the property, it would be so encumbered by his debts, that he could of course not assist her even were he inclined to do so, and she well knew that he did not care for her at all.

It was now half-past six o'clock. What could delay them ?

CHAPTER XXV.

Deem thy child happy: for she is well.

A fate possesses her, so that she is released from troubles.

EURIPIDES.

WHAT could delay them? Not a very unusual circumstance—one of those accidents which we hear or see the account of in some of the papers nearly every week. But we are very hopeful, or callous, and do not often expect that we shall ourselves lose our limbs, or that we shall be obliged to “mourir en personne,” as the Frenchman once said.

Lord Blandon certainly did not; and he was very much surprised, and took it as a personal affront, when there was a stoppage that day in a long dark tunnel, and he muttered something about “this confounded line”—then he shrieked out with agony, for

there was a violent crash, and he saw and felt nothing more!

Letitia did not shriek: she habitually realised the possible danger of railway travelling—more especially of the passage through tunnels—and the awful crash found her in prayer. Not because she hoped by her prayer to avert the awful moment, if it was so ordained that her life should thus end; but to be ready—to be found in the act of preparation for the great hereafter.

She heard other piercing shrieks besides Lord Blandon's—then a sensation as if of being dashed violently upwards, and her head came in contact with something which rendered her insensible.

A collision in a tunnel is of course one of the worst kinds of accidents, and providentially it is of comparatively rare occurrence. Thus the misery of this accident was augmented by the darkness, and the impossibility of getting immediately at the principal sufferers.

An interval elapsed, during which time those who had been the least injured were perhaps the greatest sufferers. The persons who had escaped with only slight bruises or contusions, with minds unabsorbed by bodily

pain, or undeadened by stunning insensibility, were destined to hear the awful groans of the mangled sufferers—to endure the unspeakable agony of knowing or suspecting that a father, child, or wife, was dying under the carriage which they could as yet not see. For at first all was darkness; and gradually the fitful lights of lamps brought by railway officials gleamed on the wreck, and brought to view the full horrors of the scene. The broken carriages were at last cleared away, the dead bodies extricated, and survivors carried to the nearest places where assistance could be procured. Of the four persons in the carriage in which Letitia had travelled, one was quite dead, and the other three severely injured.

Letitia was still insensible, for she had received a violent blow, as well as a deep cut on her right temple. But the surgeon who examined her said no limbs were broken, and after a few restoratives she opened her eyes and became fully conscious of all that had happened.

Lord Blandon had received severe fractures of a leg and arm, as well as bruises elsewhere; but he retained sufficient con-

sciousness to make a most violent outcry, and in his fury made the air resound with his curses.

Poor Miss Lorraine, the jolly girl who was in the act of going to join the merry party—the fast young lady—the bold rider, who prided herself on never being afraid of anything, and laughed at what she called the weaknesses of those who gave way to apprehension or dread—the jolly girl, with her hat and scarlet feathers, was now a mutilated mass, so as to be scarcely recognisable. Her poor weak mother, who had received less positive injury than any of the other three passengers, was scarcely able to comprehend what had occurred, so completely was she paralysed with fright and the awful horror of the scene. The servant who had been sent for Letitia had escaped almost uninjured, and he had to identify the sufferers, so that as soon as a carriage could be procured, Letitia was placed in it, and conveyed to Sir John Morland's, which was only six miles from the scene of the disaster, the doctor who was present having said the drive would not be injurious to her.

But during this unavoidable delay exaggerated rumours of the accident had reached Blenken Hall, and of course had been carried up, with no small additions, to Lady Glenmaurice's bedroom. Mrs. Spinners rushed in to her with a face full of that kind of triumphant importance which those who have to tell bad news often evince.

"Ah, my lady, such a haccident as 'as a 'appened, and a confusion 'as took place on the line; such a coalition with the express train, and all the passengers killed in the great tunnel."

"All killed! What'do you mean?"

"Yes, all killed; it's quite true. Mr. Jackeymo told me hisself; and Sir John Morland is gone off hisself to see if he could find any one surviving. It's quite dreadful it is!"

"Nonsense," said Lady Glenmaurice; "people are never all killed—such a thing never happened."

"Ah, my lady, but the two trains met one another in the tunnel, both going as quick as they could, for 'twas the express, and the tunnel is full of confusions. If Mr. Jackeymo had not a told me I would

not have believed it ; and it's all so dreadful, it's really hardly creditable."

What did Honoria feel on hearing this news ? Perhaps more than she herself expected, more than those who thought they knew her best would have expected. She was saddened and annoyed ; but apart from the loss—the failure of her plans—she was really sorry. She saw Letitia in her imagination ; saw her fresh young face ; saw her, as she often had seen her, attending to poor old Lord Glenmaurice ; saw her where she last had left her kneeling at his feet, when she had borne patiently her own burst of ill temper. She could not drive the sad image away from her mind ; it haunted her so vividly as she lay in her bed, that after a little while she burst into tears.

They were the first genuine tears caused by unselfish grief—caused by caring for another more than for herself—that she had shed since she was a young girl, and they seemed less bitter than the hot tears of rage and despair which angry passions sometimes forced from her.

As the tears flowed they softened her heart, and she almost prayed—the first attempt at prayer for many a long day—that

Letitia might not die—that she might see the poor girl again; and she half vowed, that if ever she could have her again, she would not sacrifice her or thwart her inclinations.

She made some of those vows and good resolutions which we often make in illness or danger. Do we generally remember or keep them when the danger is past?

And yet it is better, perhaps, to feel compunction or remorse even if the period of its existence is short, for it shows there is some vitality of better feeling buried in our poor hearts.

And for the moment Honoria was sincere in her ardent wish that Letitia's life might be spared, apart from any ambitious views; and she felt inconceivably relieved when Spinners again rushed into the room with the intelligence that Lady Letitia had arrived with Mrs. Lorraine in a fly, but that Miss Lorraine and Lord Bandon had been killed.

“Her ladyship is being carried up-stairs, as she can't walk. I believe both her legs are broken, and her head is all bound up, for she's a percussion of the brain.”

Honoria, who had jumped out of bed and thrown on her dressing-gown in order to

be ready to attend to the sufferer, went into the next room, which had been prepared for her daughter's reception.

"My poor darling!" she exclaimed, as she saw the sinking form of Letitia carried into the room. "I have got up from my sick-bed in order to see you. Speak to me, dear. Are you very much hurt?"

"I hope—I think not—dear mamma—thank you so much for your kindness—I believe——" But she could say no more; she was laid on the bed, and became apparently quite unconscious.

The housekeeper, who fortunately knew something of illness, came up and examined her wound and felt her pulse, and then Honoria saw that she shook her head, and said it was a bad case.

Sir John Morland had met the sufferers on his way to the station, but he had hastened on to inquire the fate of Lord Blandon, and to see whether the account the servants gave him of the awful death of Miss Lorraine was really true. Sir John could not bring himself to believe it; to a person so unthinking as himself, inexperienced in suffering, unchecked in habits of so-called gaiety, there was something so

startling in the idea of the fast young lady being dead—the handsome girl with whom he had flirted that very morning, and planned with her the tableaux and charades they were to act that very evening—that he could not realise it. He could not believe in the dreadful fate which had befallen her, till he saw her mutilated body at the station. Then he was inexpressibly shocked, and turned away from the sight with a feeling of horror; and a realisation of that great (but often disbelieved) fact—death—and of the awful uncertainty of life, came upon him, which made him rush to the sick-room of Lord Blandon, and listen with a feeling of comparative relief to the groans which argued that life was not yet extinct. He had been carried to the nearest farm-house, for they could not venture to move him farther: the doctor, who had been summoned from Fordington, considered that his recovery was very doubtful. Sir John and his guests, who were all of them of the same fast stamp, were of course much annoyed, or, as they said, “very much cut up,” by this horrible event. But they returned home in time for dinner—at least, they did not keep it waiting much

after half-past eight—nor did they do less justice to the good cheer in consequence, nor was their laughter less loud, nor their potations and play less deep, although the sufferers were lying on their beds up-stairs ; for after the first shock caused by the sight of Miss Lorraine's unrecognisable form, they—perhaps half unconsciously—tried to drown the disagreeable impression by that kind of excitement which leads to excess, and then, as Sir John said, “the rooms of the sufferers were a long way off, so that they could not possibly be disturbed by the noise that they were making.”

But during that evening Mrs. Jellybrand, the old housekeeper, said it was a shame to go on that way, when the poor young lady's life was hanging on a thread ; for she had that kind of reverence for illness which well-brought-up servants of the old school generally evince.

“ If I hadn't a lived with Sir John's mother ever since she come here as a bride, I would have gone away long ago, and never have put up wi' the imperence of all those French monseer cooks, and valleys, and curriers, and the ladies'-maids and their cremolines, and all their airs ; Lord a'

mercy, it's enough to knock one back'ards ! But I know master would go to ruin a deal faster if I didn't overlook things a bit, for it often makes me sad to think what my lady would have said if she could see the goings on there be now. It's worser and worser, that it is," said Mrs. Jellybrand to her own still-room maid, Molly Yessop, as she came down stairs ; "and that poor beautiful young lady up-stairs—which her mother never did a care a pin as I can see, the painted Jezebel. There, Molly, stir this well, and when it's heated enough take it up and tell the innocent lamb to drink it, and I'll come and see her by-and-by."

"Yes, mum," said Molly. For this maid, the only one who fully revered the old housekeeper, had been educated by her as still-room maid.

"Or, stay, you mind and measure out these things for the morning all right, and I'll go to her myself. Poor darling, though she's suffering so, she's had an escape. I know that pert minx, Miss Lorraine (Lord help me, and she's dead ; mercy, what a judgment upon her)."

"Why, what are you about, mum ? If

you haven't been and gone and put the sugar into the tea-caddy !”

“Oh, my, so I have ! No wonders, when I heard that Spinners and the other maids a laughing, and they said Miss Lorraine was sent up as a decoy to bring that innocent dear with Lord Blandon. Mercy on us ! and he's at his last hour too ! Well, if there was a judgment a comed upon sinners, it is that 'ere, the only use I have ever heard come of those new-fangled, hell-fire spitting and shrieking henginees, that are for all the world like fire-dragons a spreading desolation round the land. And that poor Mrs. Lorraine, though she be a silly lady enough, no good comes of lettin' girls run wild in that way, a gettin' into mischief, and still worse, now she seed the body of her daughter scattered to the four winds like. I can't help pitying of her, for she's quite dumb-founded like, and doesn't seem to know nothing. There, it's ready now. I'll take it myself.”

And then old Mrs. Jellybrand toddled up-stairs, stopping occasionally to gasp for breath, for she was very old and somewhat infirm, and the life her young master led

weighed heavily on her honest and loving heart. Yet her dear Lady Lucy Morland had left her an independent allowance, to retire from service and live in quiet and luxury during the rest of her life. But she belonged to that class of disinterested and respectful old servants which is fast becoming extinct, who looked up with real veneration and affection to the masters who are kind to them, and preferred their interest to their own. So, instead of spending her latter days in comfort among her own friends and relations, she went on bearing the opposition and insults of a household where her presence was the sole check to the extravagant waste and exorbitant cheating which must exist where a rich, indolent, and thoughtless young man allows himself to be preyed upon by all who choose to do so.

Mrs. Jellybrand found Letitia suffering extremely from the blow on her head; but the old woman was sufficiently experienced in illness and accidents to see that the poor girl's habitual spirit of endurance and cheerful temper would probably conduce more than any medicine to effect a cure.

"You're of the right sort, my dear young

lady, and your beautiful face minds me of my dear lady's, and I attended her in many an illness, and when she fell down the oak staircase just afore her first confinement, and broke her leg, and the poor babe was not born alive, and the doctors giv'd her up, they did! 'But,' says I, 'she's of the right sort—a true-born lady—and she'll bear more pain without flinching than half a dozen of our great fat hulking lasses put together, for they always makes a outcry at a scratch. There isn't a pin to choose atween 'em,' says I; 'the low born is low born, and it's only when they've been brought up all their life with raal gentle-folks, as I have been, that they gets to be worth twopence-ha'penny apiece.' It's my lady's mother afore her taught me how to behave when I was a great awk'ard gowk of a maid of fourteen, and learned me to make up simples and potticaries' medicines, and how to tend the sick. There, don't try to speak to me. I see what you're thinking on, and that you like to hear me prattling about old times long gone by."

"That I do. Tell me more," said Letitia. "But first, my mother—will you not see how she is?"

"Ah, yes, that I will, for your sake. I'll go and look after her, and I'll come back and tell you."

The door was open between the rooms, and Honoria could probably hear what was said ; but the old woman did not mind that, as she was at no pains to conceal her opinion of the "gay-painted countess, who had commed into master's house, a bringing more mischief and good-for-nothing lords and ladies in her train."

"I am very ill," said Lady Glenmaurice, as soon as the good old woman stood with her old-fashioned cap and white apron at her bedside ; "very ill ; and I wish you'd send for the doctor to come as soon as possible. All these events have shaken my nerves dreadfully."

"No wonder, my lady. I should hope they have," said Mrs. Jellybrand, drawing up her tall figure with that dignified and courtly air which could certainly have been only taught to her by a lady "of the last century, accustomed to dance minuets and walk gracefully," "for 'tis sad to see her young ladyship struck down in that awful manner, and only that she's the temper of an angel she could not get over it at all ; that

wound would fester, and she'd have the deliriums. But, my lady, you've got nothing the matter but a bad cold and oppression on your chest," continued the old house-keeper, "and, if you like, I'll make you up a draught that will do you as much good as any o' Dr. Joliffe's, who has new-fangled notions, I think."

"Yes, do," said Honoria, who had sense enough to know that old nurses were often the best doctors. "And you think that there is no danger for my daughter, but that she will recover?"

"I hope so, my lady; but she must be kept very quiet; she must not have anything done to annoy or worry her, that's all. I hope you will remember it."

"Oh yes, that I will, poor darling! And when can she be moved to London, do you think?" inquired Honoria, with much anxiety. She was for many reasons now desirous to return to Grosvenor-square as soon as possible.

"We'll see to-morrow morning, my lady, how she has passed the night, and then I shall be able to tell more about it."

CHAPTER XXVI.

Let no one ever think that anything
Is beyond hope, considering what has happened now.

EURIPIDES.

LORD BLANDON remained for some time in a very dangerous state, and, as he could not be moved from the farm-house to which he had been carried, his sister, Lady Snowdon, was sent for to come from Wales to attend upon him.

Mrs. Lorraine's eldest son had also been summoned, as there had been no one present to take any steps about the mutilated body of his sister. The young man found his mother still at Blenken Hall, but so shaken by the dreadful event, that the little mind she ever had had been terrified out of

her by the concussion, and she seemed to have no clear recollection of the circumstance, scarcely even missing her daughter.

The day after it occurred she was endeavouring to dress in colours, and go down to dinner, until prevented by her maid, who tried to make her comprehend the dreadful event which had happened the day before. Then she began moaning piteously, and saying, "Ah! poor dear Alicia, I always told her not to drive that fiery horse. I knew she would upset us all some day!" And then her maid endeavoured again to remind her of the reality. "Oh! the railway, was it? Ah! but she never would believe me; she would not attend to anything I said. I might as well have talked to the post. They were all the same. Poor dear Edward, he would be killed in a steeplechase I always said, and so he was, and I know Charles will gamble away the whole property—his poor father said he would, yet it was he taught him to bet and play cards when he was quite a child, in spite of me; and Julia would marry that man who is breaking her heart now, and is quite ruined—quite! And Julia is the best of

them all! Give me the rose-coloured head-dress; there's the second bell; I shall be late for dinner. Dead! No, not Alicia; she can't be dead! What do you mean? You are gone mad!" she continued saying to the maid, who had several times tried to remind her of the horrible facts of the case.

But the next morning her son Charles, who had almost succeeded in gambling away his property, came to take her away, and gave the necessary orders for the funeral of his unfortunate sister.

We must now go back three or four days—viz. to the morning after the accident. As soon as the news of the collision, which was detailed in the newspapers, reached little Jack Surtees, he walked off to Signor Colini's, and informed him that he had now ascertained the cause which prevented Lady Letitia from fulfilling her engagement, or writing to inform him why she could not do so.

The artist heard the account with great horror, and then revolved in his mind whether he should inform Mr. O'Neil or not of the lamentable occurrence. "He will see

it probably himself," he thought; "at all events, I can do no good, and he can be of no use to the poor lady, therefore I had better say nothing."

But, strange as it may seem, Edwin had not heard of the accident. He had been in no mood for looking at newspapers, his father had not happened to notice the paragraph, and Eva seldom read a newspaper at all. Moreover, during those few days he had seen no one else. In the last chapter we left him totally ignorant of Letitia's fate, and about to search for her, in consequence of Lord Mowbray's letter, his father being on the point of starting for Ireland, and his mother preparing for her journey to Knutsford Hall.

On arriving at Grosvenor-square, he inquired whether Lady Letitia had yet returned home. The insolent footman looked rather more civil than usual; perhaps he was thawed by the event which had occurred, and which he luxuriated in detailing, with all its horrors, to any chance comers. Therefore he condescended to tell Edwin that Lady Glenmaurice and Lady Letitia were detained at Blenken Hall by a dan-

gerous accident the latter had met with on the train.

"Accident?" faltered Edwin.

"Yes, sir; and Lord Blandon, who travelled with her, his life is despaired of; and Miss Lorraine was crushed to death."

"Lord Blandon?"

"Yes, him as was in the same carriage with her ladyship, going to Blenken Hall."

"When did all this happen?"

"The day you called here, sir, with the French painter."

"And Lady Letitia was much hurt?"

"A most killed. Her ladyship got confusion on the brain, and can't speak, and don't know nobody since."

"What is the station for Blenken Hall?"

"Sandhill-road, sir; but it's a small station, and all the trains don't always stop there."

Edwin asked no more, but rushed from the house, and calling the nearest cab, drove to the station. But the three o'clock train had started—there was no other for three hours.

He stood in the waiting-room, watching the hands of the clock, which seemed to him never to move, or rather to go backwards.

Then, during those long hours of helpless inactivity, the details, with all their possible and improbable consequences, worked their way into his mind. He had scarcely realised them while they were being told.

CHAPTER XXVII.

What phantom of the unhopèd-for do I see?

EURIPIDES.

DURING these same hours Honoria was also a prey to anxiety, but from a very different cause. The early morning post had brought her a letter from Ireland, written on the same day as that of Lord Mowbray to Henry O'Neil. It was from Lady Gordon, detailing the catastrophe at Dermot Castle, and it was just the sort of letter that Lady Gordon enjoyed writing. After giving some account of the magnificence of Dermot Castle, it ran thus :

"Then, my dear Lady Glenmaurice, just as we were in the middle of this more than royal banquet, we were all frightened out of our wits by the most dreadful shriek you ever heard, and then a sort of laugh that

made one's blood run cold. I never heard anything like it—never, and shall never forget it as long as I live, and every one I talked to seemed to think it came from a different part of the room. Some of those Irish people said it was a banshee, but that, you know, one can't believe. However, we had scarcely got over this, and were beginning to talk again, when some queer-looking men came into the room, and Lord Ardfinnan was called away to speak to them. I thought this very odd at the time, though most people did not seem to think anything of it, and Lady Ardfinnan looked just as usual; you know she's such a cold-blooded little person—at least you and I always thought so—though she did really show a monstrous deal of feeling afterwards, and was quite upset. But I must not anticipate. Well, all that passed off, and we went into the ball-room, which was by far the most beautiful thing you ever saw—such a pity you did not come over—and there we found a number of the aborigines already arrived. By-the-by, Lady Teviot had a beautiful dress, which was just come from Paris, the new colour, and would have looked well on anybody else, but it made her look so old

you can't think. Well, the dancing began, and everything was in full gaiety, when we heard through the ball-room that horrid shriek again, and sort of sound as of somebody clapping their hands, and a moment or two after half a dozen servants came rushing in for Roland O'Neil, saying that Lord Ardfinnan had thrown himself over the castle wall into the river. At first we did not believe it, but we all went out and found it quite true, and Lady Ardfinnan rushed down in her diamonds and all, just as she was, and tried to throw herself into a pond in the Mermaid's Cave, but was rescued by Lord Mowbray. It now has come out (so Frank just tells me) that Lord Ardfinnan stole a Will, and murdered somebody or other to get at it, and that his brother Henry is the real owner of everything here. We have only just got home to Dingleford Castle, for we could not get our carriage for ever so long, and only got home to breakfast. Did you ever hear of anything so dreadful?

“But among all the wild stories which have been in circulation since, there is one which I can't believe. It is that you changed the children—that Lady Letitia is Lady

Ardfinnan's daughter, and Mr. Roland O'Neil your son. Lady Teviot says it can be proved. Now, my dear Lady Glenmaurice, I often spoke and advised you—all from the best of motives, I'm sure you know. I told you that reports would some day reach you, and that you would be sorry for it, and now I feel it my duty to tell you these real facts as soon as possible. You know I always cautioned you to be more circumspect—didn't I, years ago?—and really if you were so imprudent as to act in such a strange and unaccountable manner, why—why of course”

“I must go to London,” thought Honoria, when she had read thus far; “I must get hold of Mrs. Probyn. If Letitia can't travel, I must leave her here.” Then she remembered that another post came in at one o'clock from Ireland. “I'll wait for that, and see if all these horrors are really true! Perhaps my father, or somebody else, will write.”

The one o'clock post did bring more letters. It brought full and sad confirmation of all the horrors before detailed, and one from her father written in the full burst of his sorrow and indignation. This

letter seemed, at first, to have the effect of driving Lady Glenmaurice to desperation ; she suddenly dashed the burning tears from her eyes, and rose up from her chair, exclaiming, " But I'll deny it ; no one but Nurse Probyn can prove it ; if she remains faithful and silent, appearances may yet be saved. . ." But, after a few minutes, the reaction came, and as she began to realise that Morgan was really gone, genuine tears flowed fast from her eyes, and violent sobs choked her words. He was the only man she had ever loved ; and though they had quarrelled, and of late had scarcely ever met, still, in her softened state of mind, she felt more acutely than she herself could have believed possible the awfulness of his tragic end, and reproached herself bitterly as having been the destroyer of his life and reputation, and traced back all the disasters that had followed him and herself to the one little lie she told long ago, about her engagement to Lord Dumbleton's party.

Letitia was still confined to her bed, but through the open door she heard Honoria's sobs, and called out to ask if anything distressed her.

" And she, that dear good girl, the only

comfort, the only blessing I had, and now I shall be deprived of her, too! She will be taught to hate me!" And the erring woman sobbed more bitterly than ever.

"Mamma, do come; pray tell me what all this is—or, no, I will get up and come to you."

"Lay still there, darling child; I will come to you," said Honoria, entering her room. "There is bad news, very bad news, in some letters I have just received."

"Bad news! Is papa worse, or——?"

"No, child, not that; you are always thinking of poor old Lord Glenmaurice." Then she told Letitia that Morgan had killed himself, and read out part of the letters she had received, suppressing all mention of the actions imputed to herself, and also glossing over the cause which had induced Lord Ardfinnan to commit suicide. She felt a sort of strange satisfaction in seeing Letitia's tears flow; not from cruelty, but because there was a sort of sympathy—a gratification in witnessing a grief that seemed an excuse to herself for the bitter tears that must keep flowing.

Of course, Letitia wept principally for Nesta; she imagined her lonely, miserable

—the intense love for her husband adding inexpressible poignancy to her horror and grief at his loss ; all this, of course, made Letitia's tears flow thick and fast.

"I must go to London," said Honoria, "on business, by the late train ; and then, to-morrow, if you can't come, Mrs. Jellybrand will take care of you."

"You must go to London on business, and you look so very miserable, so very anxious. Oh, mamma, I am sure there is something more ; pray tell me what it is."

"No, I assure you, nothing more," answered Honoria, with a return of her old pettish anger.

Letitia forbore to make any further inquiries, and only asked whether the letters contained any details of Lady Ardfinnan's state, and whether they were likely to come to England.

"Nothing at all, and I am sure Nesta is less to be pitied than I should be under such circumstances, for she is surrounded by all her devoted friends—Lord Mowbray, Aunt Mary, Mr. Praid, and my father ; and he would go through fire and water for her, I know, and that's more than he or any of them would do for me, for his own child, I

can tell you. Now I must go and ring your bell, for that odious Spinners won't attend to mine; she never answers it."

"Stay, dear mamma, do not ring it twice, or poor Mrs. Jellybrand will come; she told me that if I rang twice she would always come herself."

"Oh, I dare say; they all take care of *you*, but they don't care what becomes of me."

"Oh yes they do," said Letitia, who was deeply touched by the bitter sorrow evinced by Lady Glenmaurice, and wished, if possible, to comfort her. She wished to propose going with her, but felt so unequal to any fatigue or exertion, that she knew it would be impossible.

Honoria, in her impatience, had pulled the bell twice, so that Mrs. Jellybrand answered it. Letitia explained and apologised, saying:

"My mother is obliged to go to London on urgent business, and wishes to commit me to your care."

"Certainly, my dear young lady; I will take as much care of you as if you was my own child, that I will."

"Pray Mrs. Jellybrand, will you try to find my maid Spinners, and tell her I want

her to pack up, for I must go to London in half an hour."

"Oh yes, my lady; at least, I'll try; but it ain't of much use for me to go after them fine ladies'-maids; it's what I'm not equal to—a plague on 'em. They don't mind me no more than if I was an old shoe, that they don't."

Mrs. Spinners "was gone out a ridin'," as she called it, "with a party in a waggonette," but one of the best tempered of the under-housemaids was induced to come and assist.

"That Spinners may go about her business when she comes in," said Honoria. "I'll have nothing more to do with her. Remember you give her warning, Letitia, as soon as ever she appears."

The little excitement of having to prepare for her journey, served temporarily to distract Lady Glenmaurice's mind from the greater misery and annoyance. So she drove off cheerfully, leaving a message for Sir John Morland, who was out. But this state of mind lasted no farther than the station. The train passed through the same tunnel where the horrible accident had occurred. She thought of this, of Morgan's

fate, of her own probable loss of character, of her threatened poverty.

The train arrived safely at the London terminus.

Edwin was still waiting for the eight o'clock train, which was to leave in a few minutes. He had only seen Lady Glenmaurice once — at Lady Gordon's party, that memorable night when he saw Letitia for the first time—but he immediately recognised her. He saw she was quite alone, and that she looked as if she had been weeping. He accosted her, told her his name, and asked if he could be of any use.

"Who—Mr. O'Neil—what O'Neil?" said Lady Glenmaurice, half bewildered at the noise and sudden blaze of light on the platform.

"Edwin, Lord Ardfinnan's nephew. I have heard of your daughter's accident: may I be pardoned for asking how she is?"

"Better, much better. How came you to know that she had met with an accident? She is really much better, though," she added, when she saw the expression of intense anxiety on the young man's face.

"But she is not with you?"

"No, for she cannot be moved from her bed; she was very severely hurt."

"Then she is remaining alone at Sir John Morland's?"

"Yes, but she is not alone, for the dear old housekeeper—quite a motherly sort of person—is attending to her, and Dr. Philpots, who is considered an able physician. I shall probably return there to-morrow, if I am able to finish some urgent business which brought me to London."

"I will not detain you," said Edwin, "for I see you are of course anxious to proceed to your own house; but" added he, after a moment's consideration, in which his mother's words recurred vividly to his mind when she had mentioned his altered circumstances, and the prospect which now opened before him—"but, if I could have a few minutes' conversation with you, I should be glad—it would be"

"Why what can you want to say? Is it—can it be anything relating to those dreadful events which have occurred at Dermot Castle?" said Lady Glenmaurice, who began to fear that Edwin was aware of the reports about the change of the children, and was going to take legal

steps to prove his father's right to the peerage. "Of course," she thought, "Henry O'Neil will show his right to the Ardfinnan title and property, if he proves this."

Her heart beat violently, and she was scarcely able to stand; but her lips were compressed, and defiance to the last might be read on her brow.

Edwin drew a long breath, and said :

"Till this morning I was not in a position to speak about it—about her—about Lady Letitia"

"About Letitia—what can you mean?—but you scarcely know her—I am not aware——"

"I have met her three times . . . I she I had nothing to depend on except my own exertions, till now. . . . But my father has come into the Kiloran property by a Will which had been—been mislaid. And, therefore, I——"

"Oh—ah—Letitia—I understand—you like her, then—well—if she thinks as you do, I don't see why it might not go right," was the enchanting reply, which saved him the embarrassment of finishing the sentence, and left him in doubt whether the whole scene were not a dream.

It was no dream. The poor untrained, conscience-stricken woman had found such relief in Edwin's proposal, when she expected from him nothing but humiliation, that she would gladly have given her consent, even if his fortune had been very much less than it was. She really felt grateful to him—and gratitude, even when ignobly roused, is still an appeal to one's better feelings. But, besides this, what other chance had she against the scandalous reports mentioned by Lady Gordon? If her reputed daughter (she thought) were married to the heir of the estates, which depended on the verification of those reports, some arrangement might be made—he would not like a scandal so nearly concerning his own wife; and as to Lord Blandon (if indeed he recovered), after all it would be very doubtful if Letitia could be induced to marry him; and really she kept hearing such things of him, that she could hardly wish for it now.

“You can come to Grosvenor-square to-morrow,” said she, “and then, if I am going back to Blenken Hall, I can take a message, or you can write to her.”

“He might write to her!” Was that the

same dark station where he had waited for nearly four hours? The dingy waiting-room now appeared a scene of enchantment, of bliss beyond all conception of joy that he had ever contemplated.

Lady Glenmaurice got into her carriage and drove off; Edwin remained rooted to the spot, gazing after her, and, in the intensity of joy, the minutes now seemed longer than the hours of woe and anxiety he had passed on the same platform; half a century of happiness seemed to elapse during the little space between those blissful words "you can write to her," and the ringing of the bell that announced the departure of the train, five minutes afterwards, which roused him from his reverie.

It was only when he returned home, and related the whole conversation to his mother—it was only then he began, to remember that all was not happiness yet—that Letitia was still confined to her bed and scarcely out of danger.

"If she should be worse than—than I suppose?" said Edwin, turning deadly pale at his own suggestion.

"She is well taken care of, and youth, strength, and a calm, well regulated mind,

are all in her favour. I trust and hope all will be well."

"But I might go there—I ought to go there to-morrow?"

"Yes; I see no objection, under *all* the circumstances."

"Will you?"

"No, it might appear too intrusive, and as if we believed we had a right to interfere; but if you find she is not so well, telegraph for me, and I will come."

When he called in Grosvenor-square the next morning, he found that Lady Glenmaurice would not be able to return to Blenken Hall that day. In fact, she said she had so much to do, and she found Lord Glenmaurice in such a sad state of health, that she despaired of being able to leave London for some days. But she expressed great pleasure at his having thought of going there, and said that a great weight of anxiety was taken off her mind in consequence.

Lady Glenmaurice was, in truth, all smiles, and exerted to the utmost the powers of fascination for which, when she chose, she was so eminently distinguished. With the honeyed tones of her voice ringing in

his ears, and her smile of grateful welcome before his mind's eye, he left the house, passing in the hall the obsequious bows of the butler and of his old enemy Thomas.

There was little alloy in his happiness when he started on his journey. Had not Lady Glenmaurice told him that Letitia was going on well? But still, in spite of youth and hope, and Lady Glenmaurice's assurances, fears would creep over him as he proceeded. When he passed the spot where the accident had occurred, he realised more fully than ever the full horror of it; and by the time the train reached the Sandhill-road station, he had begun to feel, for the first time in his young life, that gnawing sensation at the heart which many of us know too well.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I commend thee, because thou praisest God and hast changed thy conduct,
For though sometimes late indeed is the help of the gods, yet in the end it is never without power.

EURIPIDES.

At Sandhill-road station, Edwin found that the only conveyance available for immediate use was a higgler's cart. This he hired to take him to Blenken Hall, where he arrived a little after three o'clock.

A britschka, and a break heavily laden with luggage, stood at the door. Three or four ladies and gentlemen were looking out of the dining-room windows—others were coming out of the house.

Poor Edwin was but two-and-twenty; so let not the reader be hard upon him if his really intense anxiety for Letitia was for a few seconds neutralised by the uncomfortable sensation of encountering all those un-

expected pairs of eyes, while driving up to the door of a stranger's house in a higgler's cart.

"Who's this?" asked several voices at once.

"It's the man to tune the piano," said one.

"Not he, in such a trap as that," said another. "More likely a dancing-master, asking for custom."

"It's my belief that he's got a writ," said the third, in a low, warning voice. This last speaker was a fast young man, unknown to fame, but not unknown to the Jews.

"What do you want?" said a pompous-looking young man, dressed in an exaggerated sporting style.

"What's that to you—unless you are one of the grooms out of livery? If so, send the butler," answered Edwin, suddenly recovering his self-possession.

The questioner slunk away, amid some smothered tittering from the servants who were standing by.

Edwin's Irish blood was roused by the pompous man's impertinence; and, like a genuine Irishman, he resented it for an unexpected reason. A slight to him at the present moment was a slight to the object

of his visit, and a slight to the object of his visit was a slight to Letitia herself. He bounded out of the cart, and asked which was Sir John Morland. The butler came forward, and said that Sir John was just preparing to leave home, but that he would go and call him.

"Never mind," said Edwin, impatiently, giving his card. "How is Lady Letitia? I have a letter for her from Lady Glenmaurice. Here it is. Stay, where is her maid?"

"It's the housekeeper, Mrs. Jellybrand, that's been attendin' of her, sir," answered the butler. "Would you like to see *her*?"

"Yes, at once. Thank you. But—not out here."

He was shown into a sort of morning-room which appeared to be never used, and left to his fast-recurring anxiety.

At length—that is, as soon as she was told by chance that he was there—the old housekeeper came. He then learned that Letitia had had a serious relapse, owing (it was supposed) to some sudden bad news in a letter, incautiously told her by Lady Glenmaurice, and that in consequence the party had broken up—quiet being absolutely ne-

cessary for her. This was the meaning of the carriages at the door.

He placed the letter in her hand, and said, in a broken voice :

“ But how is she really ? Is there any—danger ? ”

The old housekeeper looked earnestly at him for a few minutes, and replied :

“ Well, sir, I hopes not ; but I think you'd best not see her—yet ; for although she knows nobody, she might find out that you was in the room. I have a-knowed such a thing to happen afore in such-like circumstances ; and please God to bring her through the worst, I make no doubt the sight of you might help her to recover.”

“ The sight of him might help her to recover ! ” It may well be imagined that, after hearing these words, the old housekeeper, in her high starched cap, and muslin handkerchief pinned across her breast, assumed the form of an angel in his sight. He hung upon her words with a sort of unconscious feeling that there was protection in them for Letitia—a vague, and certainly unacknowledged hope, that the crisis might pass during the prolonged outpouring of Mrs. Jellybrand's kind and earnest garrulity.

Mrs. Jellybrand had discernment enough to divine that the handsome young man who arrived at Blenken Hall just as the house was becoming suddenly cleared of its noisy guests, was of a different stamp from those friends of Sir John's who had excited her censure. She discovered, too, that a deeper feeling than mere relationship caused the anxiety which was so plainly written on his countenance, in spite of his endeavours to conceal it.

Before Sir John Morland left home, he saw Edwin O'Neil for a minute, and begged him to remain, and make what use of his house he liked.

Even he, thoughtless as he was, as well as the greater number of his guests, were awed by the danger of Letitia—by the news that the beautiful girl, whom they all remembered with that sort of admiration which the really good and beautiful inspire, was now lying at death's door. They had been shocked by the fast Miss Lorraine's horrible end, and turned away from the contemplation of it with that sort of dread which made them take refuge in increased excitement. But to know that the gentle and lovely Lady Letitia Glenmaurice was now,

perhaps, dying under the same roof with them, inspired them with something akin to that sort of awe that leads men to veneration for what is holy and good—to a conviction that there is something better than themselves in this world—a conviction (if they have sufficient power left to reason or think) that there is a good God, and, perhaps, even a state of possible happiness beyond the grave.

Mrs. Jellybrand said it was a judgment upon them all for their goings on, and that “no luck would ever come to the house again if that angel should die.”

Dr. Philpots, who was with Letitia when Edwin arrived, now begged that some eminent physician might be telegraphed for from London, as he felt the responsibility was too heavy for him alone in Lady Letitia's present state. Edwin sent for his mother. Mrs. Jellybrand said she was very glad to hear that a lady—a real lady as she was sure the gentleman's mother must be—was coming to see the poor young lady, and help her to attend to her.

“It's long since a real lady has trodden these old boards,” she said to herself, “for these painted and bedizened creatures be not

fit to sit down upon the beautiful chairs and sofas which were worked by my lady's great-grandmother."

The eight o'clock train that evening brought the London doctor and Eva to the Sandhill-road station, where Sir John's carriage had been sent by Mrs. Jellybrand to meet them. They had not travelled down in the same compartment, but when they found themselves together in the brougham, they soon made acquaintance with each other.

On their way to Blenken Hall, the doctor asked many questions as to the age, constitution, and habits of the patient; and he seemed surprised at learning that Eva was not her mother. Eva explained in a few words the cause of her having been sent for, and that her son had come with a message from the young lady's mother—that his interest in the patient was greater than that of mere relationship.

"And the young lady's mother, why is she not with her?"

"Lady Glenmaurice is gone up to town on business. My son saw her this morning; she said she could not leave London at the present moment, and it was very doubtful

when she would be able to do so, on account of Lord Glenmaurice's health. She found him so very ill when she got home last night."

"Ah, yes, I remember—paralytic. I was called in three years ago on a consultation."

At the lodge they were met by Edwin, whose impatience to ascertain that both had arrived induced him to be there.

"Fine young man, indeed, madam," said the doctor, as they drove up the avenue. "Full of feeling, too, I see; but I'm afraid the quiver on his lips bodes no good to the invalid. But she's still alive, however——"

Without question, delay, or greeting, they followed Edwin up-stairs, and found Mrs. Jellybrand outside Letitia's door. She silently motioned the doctor to enter, while she still kept her post on the outside. The old housekeeper was well aware of the importance as well as of the extreme difficulty of insuring perfect quiet; and in the determination to prevent, if possible, any sounds from reaching the sick-room, she had stationed Molly at the servants' end of the long corridor.

Edwin remained motionless by her side, trying to still the loud beating of his heart,

that he might catch any sound that came from the sick-room.

The minutes passed, and no sounds from within reached their ears. At last Edwin heard, or rather felt, the hushed pressure of footsteps moving along the floor. The door softly opened, and the doctor came out.

Edwin followed him silently down stairs, and they opened the first door they came to. It proved to be the dining-room, disfigured by the remains of a disorderly meal—the late breakfast, or luncheon, that had not yet been cleared away. Instinctively they turned from it, and opened the door of another room. It proved to be the library.

Edwin looked into the doctor's face with the unspoken question written on his countenance which he longed yet feared to ask.

"I can say nothing," said the doctor; "twenty-four hours will show, probably. Get me paper and ink. Is there a good chemist's near? Can any one attend to us?"

Edwin went to the staircase and beckoned to Mrs. Jellybrand to come.

"There ain't no chemist's within six miles," she said. "I don't know any of the

fine names they gives to things now-a-days, but I can make up a prescription as well as any 'poticary." And Mrs. Jellybrand put on her spectacles and read it. "I have got well-nigh most of these things in the medicine-chest my lady gave me; I keeps it always full of the best medicines—least-ways, those that was thought to be the best in my day."

"Good—very good," said the doctor, when he had inspected the chest. "Now measure it out, and make it up before me. All right—only you have not got any—Well, never mind, I'll send it by the next train; in the mean time, this will do nearly as well. We all come round at last to the old—nothing new under the sun."

He gave some more directions, and was then about to depart.

"But will you not return?" faltered Edwin.

"I do not see that I can be of further use. I have explained the plan to Dr. Philpots."

"But if she gets worse——"

"She can't be worse, my good sir."

"And you cannot wait?" said Edwin

who clung to the only hope that the presence of Dr. Jeffrey gave him with the tenacity of despair.

"Impossible—besides, it would be of no use; but she may rally—it is possible, very possible," he added, no doubt in compassion to the expression of agony on the young man's face.

Edwin watched him drive off, and felt as if his last hope was gone. Then he slowly returned to his post in the corridor at her door.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Ion. Oh, dearest mother mine, with delight at seeing thee,
I have thrown myself upon thy glad cheek.

Creu. Oh child, oh light more excellent to a mother than the sun
(For God will make allowance for me), I hold thee in my arms.
An unhopèd-for discovery, whom down beneath the earth
In the nether world with Proserpine I thought was dwelling.

Ion. But oh loved mother mine, in thy arms
Both as dead and not dead I shall seem to appear.

Creu. Oh radiant expanse of ether,
What sound shall I utter, shall I cry out? Whence
Has this unthought-of rapture reached thee? Whence
Have I received this reward?

Ion. To me, everything would have seemed more likely to occur,
Oh mother, rather than this, that I am thine.

Creu. Still with fear I tremble!

Ion. What as not having, yet having me?

Creu.

For such hopes

I had banished far away.

Oh lady, whence, whence received thou my

New-born babe in thine arms,

By what hand did he go to the house of Loxias?

Ion. This was of the gods.

EURIPIDES.

A FEW days after Eva's departure for
Blenken Hall, Nesta and Aunt Mary ar-
rived at De Lacy House, and finding a note
from Eva, informing them of her journey,

determined to follow her by the first train the following morning. Henry O'Neil had set out for Ireland the day before.

Roland had gone to Eyrie Lodge, as he preferred remaining in Ireland, and Mr. Praid stayed with him, at Nesta's wish, expressed by her to both. Lord Mowbray remained at Dermot Castle until Henry O'Neil should arrive in Ireland.

Nesta had always loved Letitia; in fact, from the beginning she had experienced for her an affection so intense, and as she thought unaccountable, as to excite her own wonder. Now, however, the reason was fully explained, and during that long journey the hope of clasping her real daughter to her heart was the one feeling which buoyed her up in the midst of her crushing woe. Now, however, that the poor mother heard of the accident, and Letitia's precarious state, a new misery was added to the burden she had to bear, and the dread of not finding Letitia alive seemed to make the suspense of the journey almost intolerable to her.

The days that followed the London doctor's visit brought little change. Letitia remained most of the time insensible; but

sometimes delirious. Mrs. Jellybrand had allowed Edwin once or twice to go into the room, and it had no bad effect on the patient.

In the afternoon Eva thought it possible Nesta and Aunt Mary might arrive, and this expectation buoyed her up with a sort of vague hope. "The presence of her real mother will surely do her good," she kept repeating to herself, as she watched the poor girl's hollow, fever-wasted cheeks.

"I think she's sinking into a sleep," whispered Mrs. Jellybrand to Eva, as the evening drew on. "For worlds there must be no sound," she said, as the hour approached when they thought the travellers might be expected. "Go down and help your son to keep them back if they arrive, and don't come a nigh this part of the house unless I send Molly."

They went down into the hall and watched for the arrival of the carriage, for from there they could see all the way down the avenue, to the South Lodge.

After watching for some time they saw a carriage enter the lodge gates, and Edwin ran to meet it. On coming nearer he felt sure it was they; another bound, and his hand

was on the carriage door. Nesta's pale, anxious face looked out.

"She is alive, and Mrs. Jellybrand hopes she is sleeping," he said. "You had better get out here, and we will walk up to the house. No sounds must reach her ears; the carriage had better go round the back way to the stables, not drive up to the door.

"I will go round with it, to prevent noise," said Florentine.

Then they went into the hall, almost afraid to whisper; but Nesta leant her head on her dear friend's shoulder and silently wept. Eva sheltered her now with the same kind of loving protection as when they had been children together—when Eva was the strong tall girl, and Nesta often suffering and delicate. As Nesta leant on that dear bosom after the agony she had undergone—after the sad fate that had gathered over her life—the same old feeling of rest and hope soothed her now that she used to experience when a girl, or, earlier still, in those days when, as a tiny child, if she met with a bruise or fall, she would run to Eva to kiss it, and make it well.

There is nothing so soothing to an aching heart as the recollection of the early days

of youth—of those times in which we lived and loved, and had joys and sorrows apart, quite different from that dreadful all-absorbing woe which now bows down our heads and crushes us with its weight, and makes us feel as if we could never rise again. This recollection of our earliest days is one of the few consolations in present misery which a great loss brings.

The very feel of Eva's rounded arm, her peculiarly sweet breath, the smell of lavender she generally had about her, all reminded Nesta of the long past—long before she ever saw Morgan—before that wild dream of passion and love came to trouble her young heart and embitter her life. So she laid her head on Eva's breast during what seemed a temporary lull, and tried to nerve herself for fresh trials.

"Come and lie down on the sofa, and I will sit near and hold your hand," said Eva, as she led her into the library.

"But is there hope?" said Nesta, awakening to the full sense of the awful present anxiety.

"I think she is sleeping, at last."

Mrs. Jellybrand now entered the room.

"If the lady will come with only you,

ma'am, it's likely she may wish to see her sweet face."

"She's asleep?" said Nesta.

"Yes, my lady," said the old housekeeper, "and I see you be the most interested of all. You're as like her as two pins. I could have sworn she was her mother," muttered Mrs. Jellybrand, as she gazed with tenderness on Nesta, in her deep widow's mourning. "Don't take on, dear heart; it's like enough the poor angel may feel you there, and it will do her sleep good. Come."

So Nesta was supported up the staircase by Eva and Mrs. Jellybrand, while Edwin remained down stairs with Aunt Mary.

It was true: Letitia was asleep. A sweet smile played round her beautiful mouth; and when Nesta bent down to her, and could feel her breath, her lips moved, and Nesta fancied she heard the word "Mother." The hollow cheeks betrayed the ravages of illness, but Nesta marked the blue veins in her forehead, and the long brown eyelashes that lay upon her cheek. Her head had been shaved, and the deep scar on her temple showed plainly the dreadful injury she had received. Mrs. Jellybrand drew Nesta away.

"Now go to rest, and I hope in God she will do well. It's the first sleep she has had for many a long day."

"Thank God!" said Nesta, and burst into tears.

"Ah, that will do you good; I was afeard, when I saw you first, that you had wept all your tears away—that you was not able to cry no more—for I sees you's had a awful sight o' trouble; and it's always worse for them as has been forced to do that—alack-a-day as I's have seen. Go down with Mrs. O'Neil," she added, "for you must have some dinner with the kind little old lady, and then send up Mrs. O'Neil to me here, for one of us must not leave her alone for a moment."

Nesta obeyed the good old woman implicitly, and went down stairs, where she found Edwin, and comforted him by her description of Mrs. Jellybrand's reviving hopes, and of the smile which had dawned in sleep on Letitia's fair face.

Hours passed on, and still Letitia slept, at last so profoundly, that Nesta, and even Eva, began to be somewhat alarmed, and the more experienced Mrs. Jellybrand held a glass with a look of anxiety to her mouth, in order to discover whether she was really

alive. To their inexpressible relief, they saw that the glass became gradually dimmed by a faint breath.

Another hour passed, and then Nesta saw the dawn of a sweet smile on her lips, the limbs which had lain so long still began to move, and her eyes opened. Her face brightened as Nesta bent over her.

"Hush! all is well. Do not try to speak, darling."

"Is this Heaven?" murmured the sick girl, who had never seen so many loving eyes gazing on her before. "Ah, I thought I was dead. And where, where are we? Am I dreaming still?"

"No, it is not a dream," said Nesta, in a soft whisper, while she endeavoured to repress, under a soothing gentle tone, the transport of joy which the revulsion from despair to hope and happiness produced. "I am here, and so is Aunt Mary and Eva, and——"

"There, that's enough," said Mrs. Jellybrand; "let her take this medicine; and go, my lady, and lie down on the bed in the next room; go all of you to sleep, for she'll do well, now."

Edwin was outside the door, and heard

all that passed, and the strong man, who had borne up against nights and days of sleepless watching, now trembled so at the excess of his boundless joy, that he could scarcely support his mother when she came out, and leaning on his arm, burst into tears of grateful happiness.

Letitia passed a tranquil night, and the next morning they all gave vent to the joy they felt in her presence. And Nesta told her who was down stairs, and who had been watching over her, and standing at her chamber door for many nights and days. A faint blush came over her pale face, and she whispered softly in Nesta's ear,

"I dreamt that I saw him. But is all this too great happiness for me? What have I done to deserve it? And does he really care for me?"

CHAPTER XXX.

Ion. Ah, what blessed visions are mine this day ! *

We are blessed with prosperity as we were formerly unfortunate.
Not without tears wert thou brought forth, oh child,
But with groans from thy mother's hands thou wert divided,
But now beside this cheek of thine I breathe,
Obtaining most blessed delight.

EURIPIDES.

AGAIN it is the merry month of May, and a wedding procession is wending its way towards the beautiful old church at Knutsford. The party does not consist of many persons, for the lady of the ancient demesne who accompanies the young bride is attired in silver grey, and has only doffed her widow's weeds for this joyful occasion.

A few old friends of the family follow. The Dumbletons, their daughter Lady Di, and our old friend Mr. Praid, with Aunt Mary and Lord Mowbray. There are only

two bridesmaids—Lady Diana Mortimer, and Edwin's pretty sister, little Evy.

At the old Saxon porch they met the bridegroom, and many of the old villagers were heard to say they had never seen so handsome or happy a face before. "He do look for all the world as if he were standing at the gate of Heaven itself!" the old gardener said. The dark O'Neil eyes, and the fire that sparkled in them, recalled those of Morgan and Roland, but in Edwin they were tempered by an expression of calm hopefulness, as if he were looking forward to something better still than all the bliss this world can afford.

The ancient monuments of Nesta's ancestors, standing or kneeling in their calm repose, illumined by the May sun—those monuments which to her sensitive and venerating imagination seemed always to express on their marble features either praise or blame—now looked down, she fancied, with approval on the ceremony that united those she loved best, and seemed to smile upon her and bless her, as they appeared to do in her early childhood. Eva, the loved friend of her youth, stood near, and Nesta read in her dear face the realisation of all

her hopes—the realisation of that which ensured the happiness of her son.

And there are great rejoicings at Knutsford Hall, and the bridal pair are setting off to Stapleton Park, about six miles distant. So there is scarcely any parting to alloy the happiness of that wedding-day—a bright morning that has succeeded to a long night of gloom and sorrow.

* * * * *

And what became of Lady Glenmaurice—the proudly triumphant beauty, the Honoria of former days? Was she not present, and had it been proved that Letitia was not her daughter? Or had Nesta borne, for Morgan's sake, to lift to public gaze the veil which shrouded the mystery of Roland's birth?

And Roland—who is no relation to Nesta—is he still heir to the vast De Lacy estates as well as to Dermot Castle? Not so. It was obvious that a private arrangement to leave Roland in possession so long as he should remain unmarried, was the simplest solution of the difficulty; but it was equally obvious that such an arrangement must have a demoralising effect upon him. Therefore, the following proposition was made: Ro-

land was to retain possession of that part of the property called Carrigroghan (which he preferred) for his life, whether married or single; but, on the birth of a lawful heir, the proofs of his illegitimacy were to be amicably produced, and a sum of fifty thousand pounds paid to him. This was Edwin O'Neil's proposition, and his own words are the best commentary upon it. "One has a right," he said, "to deprive oneself, but not to defraud the unborn."

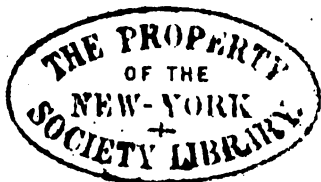
Edwin and Letitia are to live with Nesta a part of the year, and the remainder at Dermot Castle; and, perhaps, on some future day, "a son may be born in the Black Tower of Dermot, who will be the greatest of all the O'Neils."

Very little remains to be told. Poor old Lord Glenmaurice had died in Letitia's arms about a month after her recovery. Aunt Mary does not yet relinquish a hope that his widow, the proud beauty, who she has watched from her early girlhood, may, at length, have been somewhat tamed by comparative poverty and various other trials, and that she will eventually become of some real use and comfort to herself and others. She talked of going to spend the summer

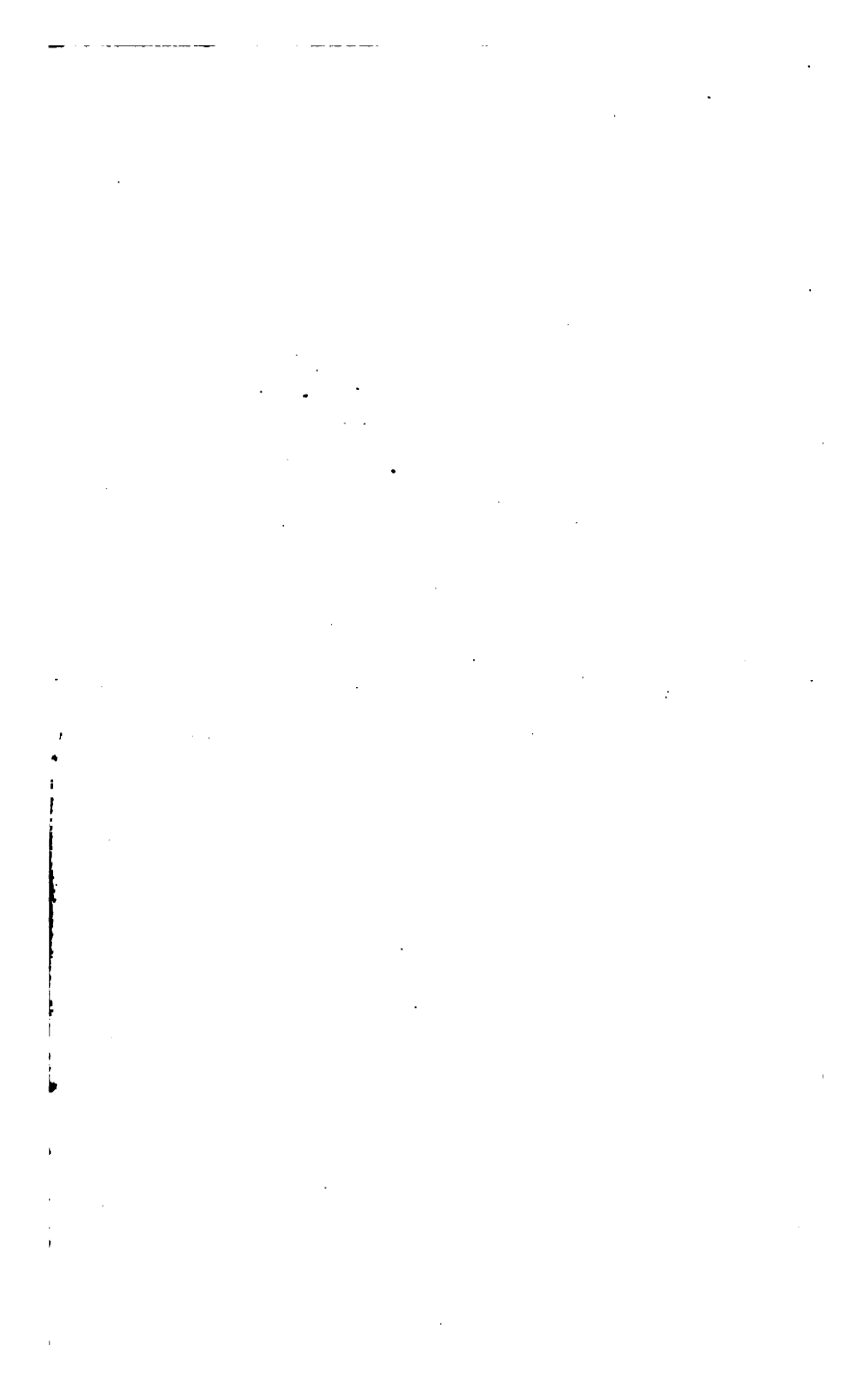
with her old father at Dingleford Castle, and Aunt Mary had promised to go there too. Perhaps her counsels and sympathy may now avail.

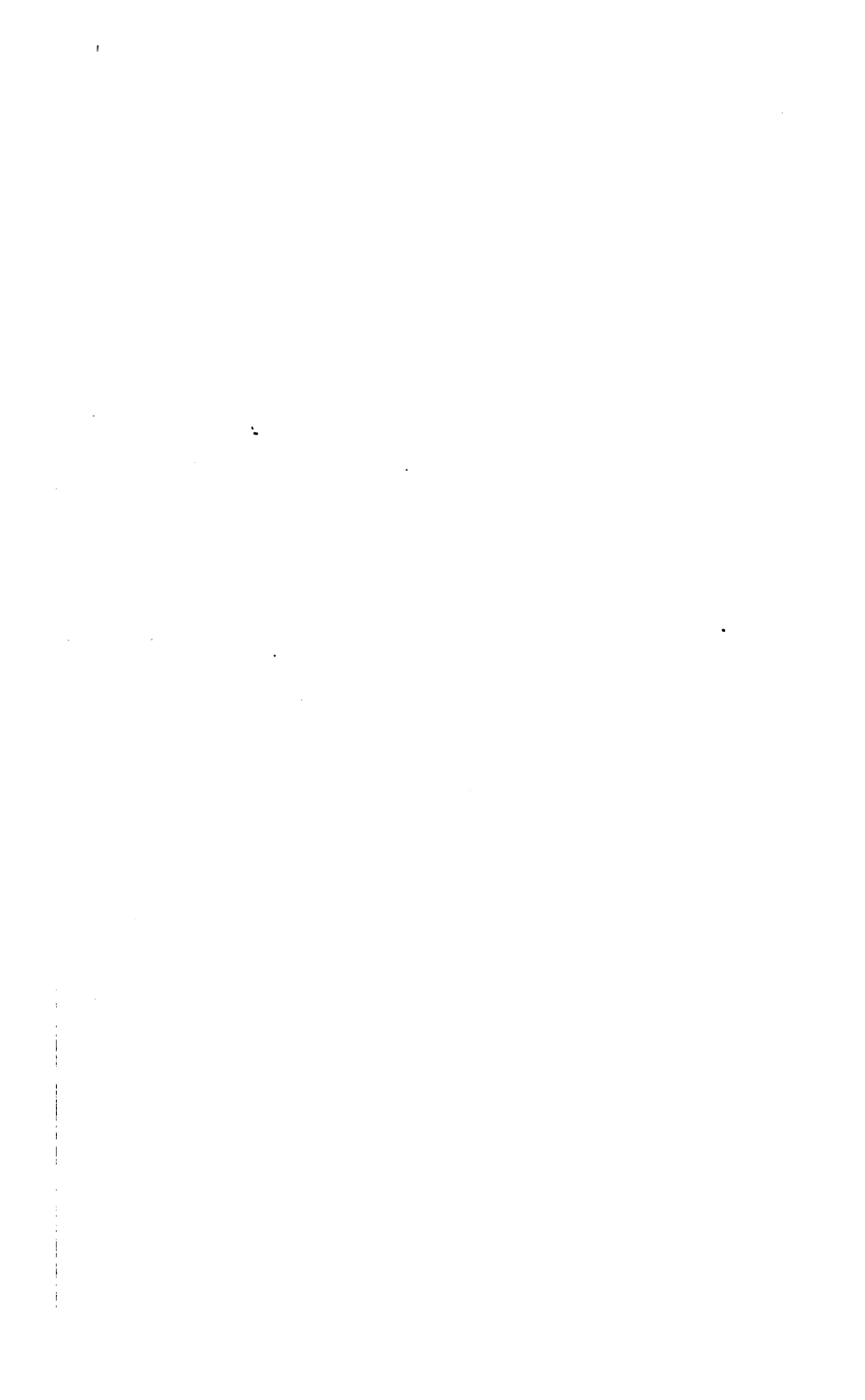
Of course Nesta settled a sufficient sum of money on Connor O'More, the illegitimate son of Morgan.

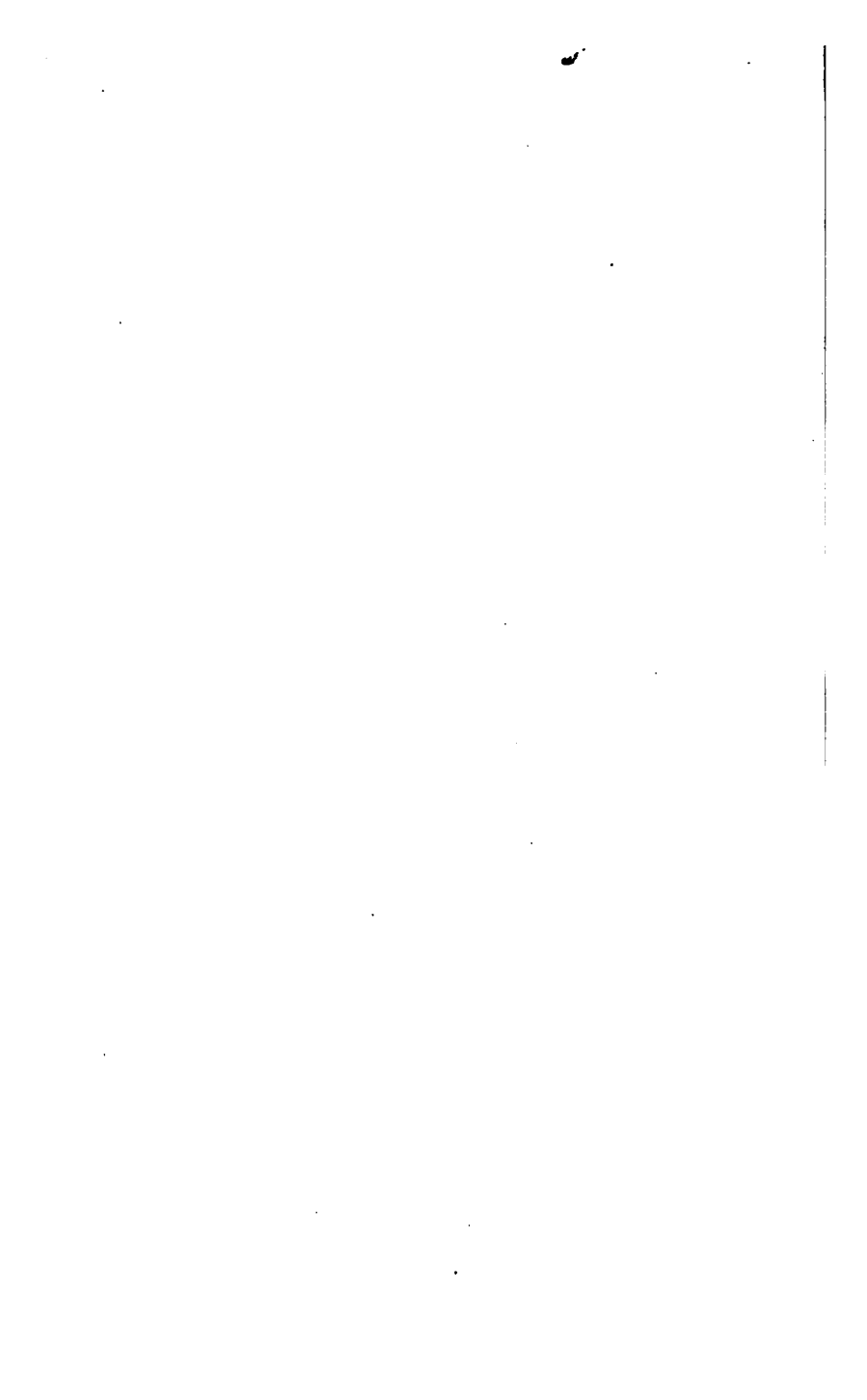
And Lord Mowbray? Was not his long self-sacrificing affection ever to be rewarded? It can be easily perceived that he still loves Nesta with the ardour of his youth, and with the full strength of his ripened and developed manhood. Time will show. Nothing is yet arranged; but Mr. Praid has that peculiar twinkling smile in his eye when their names are mentioned, which Aunt Mary says is sure to denote that all will end well.



THE END.







JAN 3 1947

